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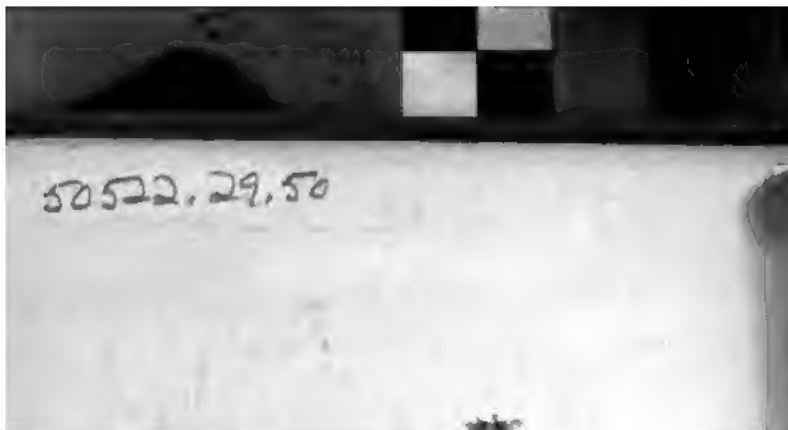
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THE DRONES MUST DIE



MAX NORDAU



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THE DRONES MUST DIE.

BY

MAX NORDAU,

AUTHOR OF

"DEGENERATION."

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.



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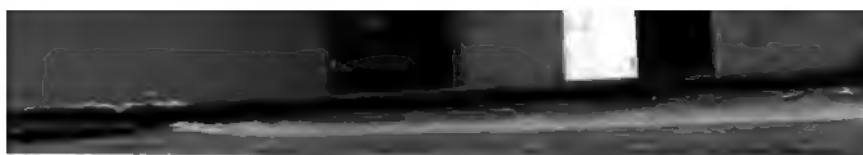
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The Drones Must Die.

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THE DRONES MUST DIE.

CHAPTER I.

AN UNEXPECTED GUEST.

"LOOK here, Käthe, see who this is that I've brought home with me! Here in Paris we find everybody, sooner or latter," Koppel called out to his wife, and pushed his companion before him into the room.

"Even long-lost old friends," added the new-comer, bowing and smiling.

Frau Käthe, who had risen from her chair, looked doubtfully for a moment at the visitor, then exclaimed, with delight and surprise: "But—this is Herr Dr. Henneberg! Well, I must say! And you have scarcely changed at all."

"You, certainly, gracious lady, have not changed in the least."

"Oh, you say that, but we have been through a great deal, haven't we, Hugo?"

"I, myself, have not been packed up in cotton-batting all this time."

"Oh, tell us all about it. And do sit down, Herr Doctor. How good of you to look us up. We so rarely see any one from home. It is a real treat for us. How did you get our address?"

"Your address?" began Henneberg, with some hesitation. And Koppel interrupted him: "It was just an accident that we ran across each other. Henneberg had no idea that we lived here. I went into the French Oriental Bank to get those papers—here they are," and

he pulled out of the breast-pocket of his coat, which had bulged with it, a large package wrapped in a newspaper, and gave it to his wife.

"I will put them away directly," said Frau Käthe, laying the package on the table, and still looking at Henneberg with a pleased smile.

"As I was going out, whom should I run against but Henneberg, just coming up stairs. I recognized him in a moment, but he did not know me."

"Oh yes, I did. Only I didn't think of seeing you in that place."

"Of course I wouldn't enjoy him alone, but took him straight in tow and brought him home."

"Delightful!" exclaimed Frau Käthe. "I suppose you came for the Exposition? A little late, are you not?"

"Oh, no; I live here."

"What? And we had no idea of it? That is too bad. Tell us. Are you married, Herr Doctor?"

"Unfortunately, I am not, gracious lady. I am still an incorrigible, God-forsaken bachelor."

"Sincere repentance may hope for forgiveness; it is not yet too late."

"I am forty-two years old, gracious lady."

"Just the prime of life, Herr Doctor! However, if we begin talking about marriage, I don't know when we should be ready to stop. But you will stay to dinner?"

"I think I scarcely ought to give you the trouble."

"The trouble? How unfriendly of you! Beg my pardon this moment."

"I beg your pardon, gracious lady."

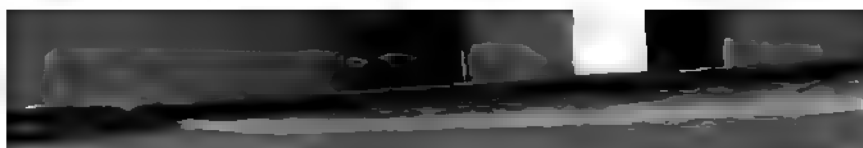
"That is right. And for punishment you must stay. You'll have to take pot-luck, you know."

"But you'll get real German dishes," broke in Koppel, "which you don't find in Paris very often."

"Yes," the wife continued, "we are always faithful to German cooking."

"Patriotism of the stomach," observed Henneberg, smiling.

"I think it's habit," Frau Käthe said; "my mother-



in-law was nearly seventy when we came to Paris, and one doesn't change much at that age."

"You brought your mother, then?" Henneberg said, turning to Koppel, who replied promptly:

"Oh, yes; one couldn't leave the poor old lady behind, all alone."

"And all this time she has never been willing to give up the care of the housekeeping, marketing, cooking and all. Now, please excuse me a moment, Herr Doctor, and then we will sit down directly." She rose, took the package of papers and left the room.

Henneberg now for the first time cast a glance around the room. It was rather a small parlour, with low walls, two windows opening into a very large, light courtyard. A red carpet concealed the floor, but near the fireplace it had been cut away, showing that the floor was laid with hexagonal red tiles. Between the windows stood an upright piano, upon which the white of a plaster bust of Schiller relieved the monotony of a wall-paper striped with a pattern of small flowers. Before one of the windows stood a little work-table where Frau Käthe had just been seated. In front of the chimney stood, as yet unlighted, a "Schuberski," one of those sheet-iron stoves on wheels with a polished marble top, which furnish the Parisians in winter with a little warmth, and sure, though slow, gas-poisoning. Over the great round table in the middle of the room, hung an uncouth, heavy chandelier of bronzed metal, adorned with glass prisms, and on the table there were stout photograph albums, a folio edition of "Faust," Hamerling's "Amor and Psyche," and a tiny gilt-edged copy of Storm's "Immensee." A set of walnut chairs covered with green rep, having a red stripe over the back and seat, curtains of the same, and, on the walls, two large engravings, one from Kaulbach's Hunnenschlacht, the other from his Zeitalter der Reformation, under glass, in black frames, completed the furnishing of the room.

"You brought your furniture with you from Berlin, I see," remarked Henneberg.

"Yes. The womenfolk could not bear to part with it. In one way it was a good plan to bring it. You know how it is—what you buy with large expense you can sell only for a trifle, and not easily at that. And when we came to live in Paris we had but little. Everything made it expedient to keep what we had. Now, all this stuff is very dear to me by reason of my sufferings on its account."

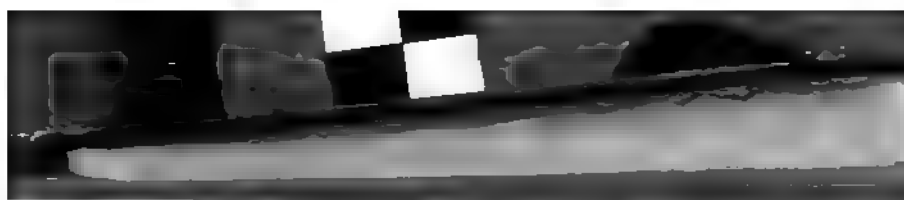
"How was that?"

"If I ever am rich enough to be independent, I shall employ my leisure in writing an epic poem about our adventures with this furniture. It makes my hair stand on end merely to think of it. When we first arrived in Paris we stopped at a little hotel near here, which Wolzen had recommended to us."

"Who is Wolzen?"

"He is the proprietor of the private school where I teach; our furniture, meantime, was left at the station. We hired this apartment, and brought our things. Then our troubles began. Before each separate article, as they took it from the wagon, the porters stood and gazed, as if it were a hippogriff. There was a staring and a shaking of heads, I can tell you! When it came to the beds, they really couldn't enjoy it alone, but called other fellows in from the drinking-shop across the street, to look and laugh, too. My mother was ready to jump out of her skin, she was so angry. To-day, after eleven years, she hasn't forgiven these Parisians for the fun they made of our eccentric furniture."

"But that was not the worst of it. When we came to getting our things into the house it appeared that neither through the door nor up the stairs could they be brought. Everything was too narrow, so I said: but the porters declared that the stairs were wide enough, but that the furniture was too large. My mother wrung her hands, and even my wife lost patience, and reproached me bitterly for having hired such a toy-place. Be it noticed, she had seen the apartment herself before I took it. But this did not help us out any. The porters tried to pull a wardrobe through, and pulled it to pieces, the wall of the stair-



way was badly scratched, the balusters wrenched, and I had about seventy francs to pay for repairs. The furniture, however, remained still in the courtyard."

"How did you get through finally?"

"How did we? Listen and shudder. After the sacrifice of the wardrobe, and after we had tried for hours to push and pull, and nearly brought the old house down about our ears I proceeded to measure things, and very soon arrived at the discouraging fact that all the entrances and apertures into the house were smaller in every direction than the objects which we had to carry in.

"A dealer in old furniture, who, as if providentially, found himself on the spot where the tragedy was going on, called out to me in a friendly way that I would better leave the old stuff lying where it was, and buy of him what I needed to take its place. He began to enumerate,—but I am afraid my answer was not so civil as he deserved, considering his desire to oblige me. This was as far as we got, on our first day of distress. The furniture stood in the courtyard, and we spent another night at the hotel.

"The next day, the concierge told us that the only way we could get the things into the house would be by hoisting them with ropes into the windows. And this was done. I will spare you the tale of the deadly anguish we all felt, as we saw each object go aloft into the air. I can only say that hanging does not seem to be any better for furniture, than it is for mankind. This gruesome death-penalty occupied the whole of the next day, and attracted all the children of the neighbourhood to look on. The dear little creatures amused themselves royally, especially when a writing-table hit against the wall and broke a leg, or when a wardrobe which had got as far as the window-sill slipped out of the blockhead's hands and fell to the ground, as happened once. We are fond of children, and their laughter was quite a consolation in our distress. So was completed our entrance into Paris. Since then we have remained prisoners to our furniture. The apartment is no longer satisfactory to us,

we have seen many that we should prefer ; but here we stay, for the idea of going through the windows a second time fills us with too much horror. You know how monkeys are caught ? With a basket shaped like a bottle and filled with Indian corn : the open, empty hand goes in easily, but the shut fist with its handful of corn cannot be withdrawn. Likewise are we kept here, these eleven years, and I shall never make an attempt to leave this apartment until I am able to furnish another, in the present fashion, with entirely new things."

Henneberg had listened much amused, and now Frau Käthe returned.

"I have been telling Henneberg how our furniture was brought in."

"Yes, that was a great business,—through the window, almost through the side of the house. It had such a charming suggestion of hobgoblin-rides, and broomsticks ! It makes your flesh creep so enchantingly, just to think of it now !"

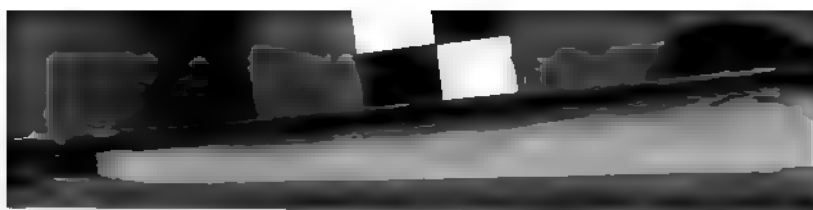
"If you had foreseen what was going to happen, you would have left your things safe in Berlin, would you not, gracious lady ?"

"That would have been a mistake, Herr Doctor. My husband tried to buy once,—no, I won't tell you about that."

"You mean my experience at the Hôtel Drouot ?" asked Koppel.

"Tell me about that," interrupted Henneberg.

"Naturally we needed a good many things ; ways of living are so different here in Paris from what they are at home ; it was my idea to go simply to some shop and buy what we had need of. But my husband is much more practical than I, and he has better judgment. To buy new things ? Oh no ; here is this excellent Hôtel Drouot, where every thing can be bought much under price. There are such extraordinary bargains there ! We needed poles for the window-curtains. Our cornices were too large to put in this baby-house. My little man goes swiftly to his dear Hôtel Drouot, spends half a day there, and comes



back at night with a wagon load of incredible trash. The curtain-poles were there, but, besides,—so far as I could see at a hasty glance—a heap of broken chairs, a dusty violin case, half of a bonnet-stand, and a collection of other choice things, which I didn't dare to touch. For Heaven's sake, Hugo, I cried in great excitement, have you robbed a ragman? No, Hugo replied quite contentedly, these things were all tied up together, and if I wanted the poles, I had to take the whole lot. But it was so cheap! Five francs twenty-five with the costs. Also the wagon? No, not with the wagon. To make a long story short, Herr Doctor, I paid the concierge a franc to have the other stuff taken away. So the four poles cost about eight francs. In the most expensive shops they can be bought for three. And then the story of the pelt? No! I will not put you to shame, my poor Hugo!"

"But how am I going to hear this story of the pelt?" exclaimed Henneberg, much amused: "I beg expressly for it!"

"I will confess about that myself. I was in the Hôtel Drouot again,—there's no use in denying, the place had an attraction for me,—and I was noticing how prices of the most ordinary things were run up. Suddenly a pelt of some kind was spread out for inspection. I thought it was remarkably pretty."

"Ahem!" ejaculated Frau Käthe with emphasis.

Koppel took no notice of this and went on: "The head of the animal, whatever it was, I could not see plainly. But the pelt was lined with red cloth, it was of a fine gray colour, as smooth as velvet, in short, it seemed very handsome to me. There was a bid, one franc! Two, I called out, and looked defiantly around for my rival. Three! he retorted sharply. Four! I cried, and my voice must have had rather an excited tone, I think, for I observed that people began to look round at me. The pelt now really fascinated my eye. It appeared to have the splendid tropical stripings of the tiger's skin, the smooth richness of some polar animal's coat, and an

amplitude worthy of the lion. I felt that I must have it at any price.

"But there was no need of my making any further effort. My rival struck his flag, and the treasure became mine at four francs. My neighbours congratulated me. But later it occurred to my mind that they seemed amused. Triumphant I went forward, paid for my pelt, and took it. Thereupon I went through a rather extraordinary experience. The pelt appeared to have entirely changed its aspect in the few minutes. It was no longer large, but extremely small; also it was not smooth, but in places extremely rough; also it was soiled rather than naturally gray,—in short, it was a dog-skin, the skin of some wretched little cur who had died in quite a mangy condition and at an advanced age. It was a real Number Nip transformation!"

"The sort of transformation," remarked Henneberg, "that usually happens when a man gets what he has very much desired to have. You experienced the difference between longing and content."

"May be so. Much disappointed, I rolled up my pelt, and, as I now became perfectly aware that everybody was laughing around me, I sneaked out of the hall and betook myself homeward. The nearer I came to my dwelling, the more humble-minded I grew, and I quite well remember standing on Pont Neuf for a full minute, considering whether I might not as well throw my purchase into the river. But a policeman stood near, and it occurred to me that he would probably think I was seeking to hide the traces of some crime. I came home, therefore, and brought my pelt with me. I pulled myself together, and I said to Käthe: 'Dear child, I have bought something at Hôtel Drouot.' From her face the smile of welcome faded at once, and a melancholy pause ensued.

"Meanwhile, my mother had come in. I forced myself to assume a mirthful tone. 'Come,' I said; 'see what I have got;' and I spread out my dog-skin on the table. For one minute the two women looked at the pelt; then my wife, with an air of the deepest



disgust, flung it off the table, my mother silently went to the door, opened it, and called the maid: 'Take this away,' she said. I didn't dare to utter a sound, and I felt most uncomfortable. Finally, Käthe asked 'And what did that—that thing cost?' 'Four francs,' I said timidly. Followed a second pause; then Käthe remarked: 'Well, this time it is not a very great misfortune, but now you must promise me that you never will buy anything for the house again.' And then and there I had to make a solemn promise to my wife and my mother that I would never surprise them with another bargain!"

Henneberg laughed heartily, and Frau Käthe remarked: "Hugo has kept his word faithfully about this. I can say that for him."

"Yes," Koppel said, "that valuable object has found shelter in a quiet place where stranger eyes behold it not. But whenever I behold it, I am confirmed in my good resolution."

At this moment the door opened, and from the adjacent room Koppel's mother came in, who meantime, had been occupied with making herself presentable. She had been fetched away from the kitchen hearth by her daughter-in-law, had laid aside her cooking-apron, and had put on a black silk gown. The old woman, for all her eighty years, looked still fresh and healthy. Her not over-stout figure was somewhat bent, but her step was active, her eyes were bright, thick, snowy hair covered her head, and her voice was strong and clear.

"We have a very dear visitor, mother," Koppel said, "Dr. Henneberg. Do you remember him?"

Henneberg, who had risen, went forward and held out his hand. She grasped it firmly, and exclaimed: "But, Hugo, you are joking! What is there to remember? Herr Doctor was here not very long ago! And how is your dear wife?"

"You are mistaken, dear mother," Koppel said gently: "You have never seen Herr Doctor Henneberg here in Paris."

"Is that possible?" rejoined the old lady, dropping

Henneberg's hand and looking attentively at him ; " my poor memory is always leaving me in the lurch. I am just good for nothing, now."

" Ah ! gracious lady," Hennebery exclaimed, " that is slander. There are many younger women who might envy you your appearance. The air of Paris seems to have agreed with you wonderfully."

" Yes, yes ; in other respects, it is not so bad,—only my poor head fails me. But shall we not go to the table ?"

" If you like, mother," rejoined Frau Käthe.

Through a smaller room, with but one window, where stood Koppel's writing-table and book-case, the little group passed into the dining-room, whose windows also looked out into the large, light courtyard. The floor here was also of red tiles, covered for the most part by a cork-carpet. Scarcely projecting from a semicircular recess in the wall was a stove of brown fluted tiles ; there was a three-foot high panelling around the walls in imitation of walnut wood. The furniture consisted of a large round table, some cane-seat chairs, a massive cupboard, a mighty grandfather's chair with foot-rest and, slung across the back, a head-rest cushion ; and a German clock in a polished wood case hung between the windows.

The son and daughter of the family were already in the dining-room : Oscar, sixteen years old,—a tall small-boned, rather pale lad, with an unruly shock of light brown hair, dreamy blue eyes, and a serious mouth, over which the first hint of a light moustache was outlined ; and Elsa, a year his senior, who had her mother's colourless complexion, but, in the girl, of very fine grain, and of a transparency like that of alabaster through which a light is shining. Her figure, of medium height, had already developed graceful curves. The great brown eyes looked merrily out into the world. Contrary to the fashion of the hour, her hair—between brown and old-gold in colour—was drawn smoothly back and braided in a single heavy tress, hanging free and reaching below her waist. The rather full, fresh red lips made a noticeable effect of colour, in the

creamy tint of the round face, and caught and charmed whatever eye—especially whatever man's eye—rested upon her. Henneberg's gaze, as her father presented him to her, lingered so long upon this dazzling girlish face, that it slowly reddened with a deep blush, which lingered several minutes before the natural pallor returned.

They all sat down, Henneberg between the old lady and Frau Käthe, and while the maid, a gruff-looking elderly person, served the fragrant, thick vegetable soup, with bacon, Koppel said: "As you see, we live entirely after the German fashion,—the dinner at noon with the regulation soup."

Henneberg nodded, and turning to Frau Koppel he said: "Did you find it difficult to get used to living here in Paris?"

"Ach Gott!" cried the old lady, and laid down her soup-spoon, "can anybody really get used to living here? These slovenly habits, all these ready-made things, all these unpractical ways,—it is really dreadful. And what makes me most disgusted is the way that people twist their eyes when they just hear the name of Paris. Paris! The wonderful Paris! The first city of the world! And now just look and see what this first city of the world is!"

Oscar and Elsa, sitting side by side, exchanged glances, and could scarcely repress a smile. Koppel said, in a low voice:

"Mother, please, your soup is getting cold."

"Yes," the old lady answered, and quickly picked up her spoon. Alternately eating and talking she went on with great fluency and increasing zeal, as every one does who has the good fortune to be able to let himself go, on a favourite topic.

"Just look at the places they live in! Mere doll's houses. You knock against the ceiling if you stretch. We had to take the top off the cupboard, or it would have been too high to get into the room. The handsome piece of furniture was almost spoiled. And these brick floors in the sitting-rooms of respectable people! With us, stalls for cows have such a floor,

And you can't get anything here that you want. Would you believe it, Herr Doctor, in this first city of the world, you can't get any Feltoner turnips?"

Henneberg smiled.

"And you want them very much, don't you?"

"I don't even remember how they taste, now," lamented Frau Koppel. "In the twenty years since we came from Berlin——"

"Oh, mother, it's only eleven," interrupted Frau Käthe.

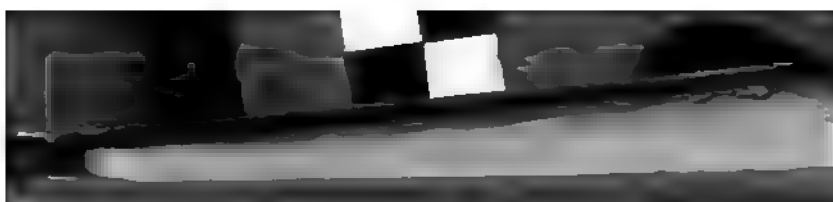
"Well, say it is eleven years. At any rate, since I've been here no Feltoner turnips have I had in my mouth. But the worst is the servants. You may be thankful you don't know anything about that. Forty, fifty francs a month wages. I am ready to cry when I think of it. Wine at every meal—just think of it, Herr Doctor! At home, in our finest country-houses, one does not have it all the time. And dessert—yes, indeed, dessert and black coffee they must have or they will not stay. And in whatever is bought they expect a sou out of every franc, and if I won't have it, the tradesman will give them the money behind my back. It is just clear stealing, and still I have to put up with it, or I could not keep a servant a single day."

"This exploitation that we have to endure through the understanding that tradesmen have with our servants, is really unbearable," Henneberg said.

"A community that allows itself, without resistance, to be robbed in this way, shows plainly that it no longer has the strength or the courage to protect its rights against impudent aggression," observed Koppel; "people here let themselves be plundered by those whom they deal with, acting with their servants, because they feel that it is not any too well settled about their own rights to what they possess. They sacrifice a part in the hope of being allowed to keep the whole."

"Are you still such a raging socialist as that?" asked Henneberg.

"Hugo keeps on talking that way in order to vex me," the old lady replied, interrupting; "but, happily, he doesn't get beyond blood-thirsty talk here at home.



From the actual movement, thank God, he has drawn back."

"In a foreign land I have no right to meddle with politics," Koppel said, in a low voice.

His mother, during this aside between the two men, had not ceased thinking about her grievances at the hand of Parisian maid-servants, and she at once went on freeing her mind:

"And if they, at least, accomplished anything to speak of! But they are as idle as sin, and understand as much about work as a curb-stone does. The person has her bed-room in the attic; evenings, she disappears; mornings, she comes down when she is ready; if a child is taken ill in the night, we must get up ourselves and make the linden-flower tea; in the morning I am always in the kitchen when the person is so gracious as to appear. She will do no washing. It must be all put out of the house. And the way washing is done in Paris appears to me to be dipping the clothes into vitriol. Anything that has been twice sent to the wash, falls to pieces like tinder. And it smells of pitch and sulphur and all sorts of hell-spice. To scrub the floor is entirely beneath the dignity of a maid-servant. For that you must have a special man come, who once a week infects the whole place.

"And as to the cooking! Bouillon is made at once for several days, or else it is bought by the quart at the butcher's." The old lady shook herself at the thought. "Above all things, not to make an effort, to do everything with as little trouble as possible is the great rule in the Paris kitchens. If there is to be a meal at seven o'clock, at six the woman of the house runs down into the street, she buys, without trying to get it cheaper, some nasty thing out of a wagon, then—scamper for your life—in five minutes everything is ready—and it is what you'd expect it to be!"

"What you want, mother," Koppel said, "is to have the mistress of the house stand sixteen hours a day on the kitchen hearth. This is not a Parisian ideal of life."

"What I want," said the old lady, hotly, "is that

everything a person does should be done with affection. There is no such thing here, either in the case of the mistress of the house or of the servants. What is not actually sealed into the wall is very soon broken; the dish-cloths disappear as if by witchcraft; if one were not after these creatures all the time we should quickly perish with dirt."

The old lady's current of talk was only interrupted from time to time by the entrance of the maid, who brought in veal cutlets with cabbage, then a roast fowl, and finally, a tart. The fowl, which was scarcely lukewarm, and the artistic tart, had evidently been obtained, at the last minute, from a shop, to do honour, by a more generous repast, to the unexpected guest.

Koppel and his wife both made repeated efforts to take the lead of the conversation, but the old lady would not give it up, and went inexorably on, airing her accumulated displeasure at the peculiarities of Parisian life.

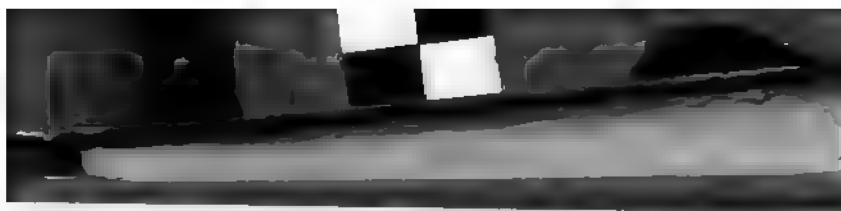
"We ought to be ashamed not to set before you red whortleberries or a mustard-cucumber with the fowl, but they can't be had in this first city of the world. Instead, they have things here that we don't have. What do you suppose was one of my first experiences here, Herr Doctor? I bought at the market a goose, which was unusually round and plump, and not too dear. When I opened the goose, after I got home, I found it was stuffed full of old greasy paper. This is what all the poultry-dealers in Paris do."

Henneberg did not appear quite so shocked as Frau Koppel expected; however he politely inquired if she did the marketing herself, personally.

"That my mother-in-law will not give up to anybody," answered Frau Käthe, speaking for the old lady, as if to excuse herself.

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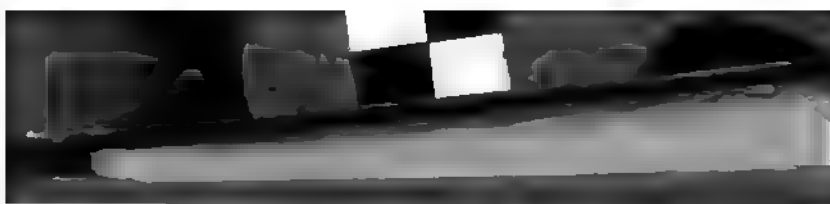
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Henneberg went on as if he had not heard her. "So, from being a teacher of mathematics, I became a financier, and such I have remained ever since, for I see plainly that financial transactions are the real

And you can't get anything here that you want. Would you believe it, Herr Doctor, in this first city of the world, you can't get any Feltoner turnips?"

Henneberg smiled.

"And you want them very much, don't you?"

"I don't even remember how they taste, now," lamented Frau Koppel. "In the twenty years since we came from Berlin——"

"Oh, mother, it's only eleven," interrupted Frau Käthe.

"Well, say it is eleven years. At any rate, since I've been here no Feltoner turnips have I had in my mouth. But the worst is the servants. You may be thankful you don't know anything about that. Forty, fifty francs a month wages. I am ready to cry when I think of it. Wine at every meal—just think of it, Herr Doctor! At home, in our finest country-houses, one does not have it all the time. And dessert—yes, indeed, dessert and black coffee they must have or they will not stay. And in whatever is bought they expect a sou out of every franc, and if I won't have it, the tradesman will give them the money behind my back. It is just clear stealing, and still I have to put up with it, or I could not keep a servant a single day."

"This exploitation that we have to endure through the understanding that tradesmen have with our servants, is really unbearable," Henneberg said.

"A community that allows itself, without resistance, to be robbed in this way, shows plainly that it no longer has the strength or the courage to protect its rights against impudent aggression," observed Koppel; "people here let themselves be plundered by those whom they deal with, acting with their servants, because they feel that it is not any too well settled about their own rights to what they possess. They sacrifice a part in the hope of being allowed to keep the whole."

"Are you still such a raging socialist as that?" asked Henneberg.

"Hugo keeps on talking that way in order to vex me," the old lady replied, interrupting; "but, happily, he doesn't get beyond blood-thirsty talk here at home.

From the actual movement, thank God, he has drawn back."

"In a foreign land I have no right to meddle with politics," Koppel said, in a low voice.

His mother, during this aside between the two men, had not ceased thinking about her grievances at the hand of Parisian maid-servants, and she at once went on freeing her mind:

"And if they, at least, accomplished anything to speak of! But they are as idle as sin, and understand as much about work as a curb-stone does. The person has her bed-room in the attic; evenings, she disappears; mornings, she comes down when she is ready; if a child is taken ill in the night, we must get up ourselves and make the linden-flower tea; in the morning I am always in the kitchen when the person is so gracious as to appear. She will do no washing. It must be all put out of the house. And the way washing is done in Paris appears to me to be dipping the clothes into vitriol. Anything that has been twice sent to the wash, falls to pieces like tinder. And it smells of pitch and sulphur and all sorts of hell-spice. To scrub the floor is entirely beneath the dignity of a maid-servant. For that you must have a special man come, who once a week infects the whole place.

"And as to the cooking! Bouillon is made at once for several days, or else it is bought by the quart at the butcher's." The old lady shook herself at the thought. "Above all things, not to make an effort, to do everything with as little trouble as possible is the great rule in the Paris kitchens. If there is to be a meal at seven o'clock, at six the woman of the house runs down into the street, she buys, without trying to get it cheaper, some nasty thing out of a wagon, then—scamper for your life—in five minutes everything is ready—and it is what you'd expect it to be!"

"What you want, mother," Koppel said, "is to have the mistress of the house stand sixteen hours a day on the kitchen hearth. This is not a Parisian ideal of life."

"What I want," said the old lady, hotly, "is that

everything a person does should be done with affection. There is no such thing here, either in the case of the mistress of the house or of the servants. What is not actually sealed into the wall is very soon broken; the dish-cloths disappear as if by witchcraft; if one were not after these creatures all the time we should quickly perish with dirt."

The old lady's current of talk was only interrupted from time to time by the entrance of the maid, who brought in veal cutlets with cabbage, then a roast fowl, and finally, a tart. The fowl, which was scarcely lukewarm, and the artistic tart, had evidently been obtained, at the last minute, from a shop, to do honour, by a more generous repast, to the unexpected guest.

Koppel and his wife both made repeated efforts to take the lead of the conversation, but the old lady would not give it up, and went inexorably on, airing her accumulated displeasure at the peculiarities of Parisian life.

"We ought to be ashamed not to set before you red whortleberries or a mustard-cucumber with the fowl, but they can't be had in this first city of the world. Instead, they have things here that we don't have. What do you suppose was one of my first experiences here, Herr Doctor? I bought at the market a goose, which was unusually round and plump, and not too dear. When I opened the goose, after I got home, I found it was stuffed full of old greasy paper. This is what all the poultry-dealers in Paris do."

Henneberg did not appear quite so shocked as Frau Koppel expected; however he politely inquired if she did the marketing herself, personally.

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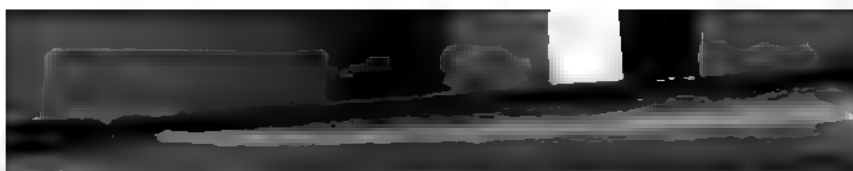
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'higher Mathematics,' not that branch of study which I used to teach for a ridiculous little salary."

"And have you been in Paris ever since that journey, Herr Doctor?" asked Frau Käthe.

"Not all the time, gracious lady. I travelled for awhile; I had known nothing of the world. After knocking about for three years I believed my collection of impressions was sufficient, and I pitched my tent in Paris."

"If I am not mistaken," remarked Koppel, "Venezuela no longer pays the interest on her famous loan, and the bonds are about worthless."

"That is quite true."

"Does this have no effect upon you?"

"Not the slightest. You can't suppose that—I put my money into any such thing?"

"No—but the people who did?"

"Am I to be expected to make good their loss? I made no pledge to keep them secure. But I am surprised to see that you have some knowledge of financial matters."

"A little. They interest me because here you see Capital in the very act, as it were."

"It's the Socialist in you that is interested, I see. As for me, I have learned to look at things differently. I have eaten of the tree of knowledge. Then your eyes are opened and you know neither good nor evil,

"The Bible doesn't say it that way," remarked Frau Käthe.

"There's the difference between then and now," Henneberg replied, and his eyes grew sad.

The cheese and grapes were finished, and Frau Käthe rose to go back into the parlour, where coffee was usually served. At this moment arose from the courtyard thin notes of a violin, accompanying a hoarse voice which was singing ballads. Henneberg glanced out of the window and saw below, a tall, haggard man, with long, coarse, half-gray hair, a long overcoat of an indescribable grayish, yellowish, brownish color, dangling round his legs, a shabby felt hat lying on the ground near him; this man was accompanying his

singing and fiddling by a sort of dancing. The skipping measure of the merry street-song, whose rhymes were emphasized and brought out triumphantly by the fiddle-bow, and the curious, frisking leaps of the performer made such a painful contrast to his thin cheeks, the sallow, half-starved skin, and the general wofulness of his appearance and his clothing, that any sensitive observer would have been more ready to weep than to laugh.

"A court-singer, who fiddles and dances at the same time, I have never before seen," Henneberg said. "The poor fellow has a kind of talent. He has discovered something new. He deserves to be rewarded for it." He drew a gold-ringed purse from his pocket, selected a two-franc piece, opened the window and threw the coin at the player's feet. The man ceased playing, picked up the money, stared at it with amazement, then looked up to the giver who nodded back to him. Then the fiddler began a new performance, shouting the words as loud as his parched throat would allow, and danced in a wide circle around his hat, with such frog-like leaps that there seemed reason to fear he might break a leg. Henneberg's liberality had produced a great effect upon the old lady and also upon Oscar. It was also observed by two young girls, whose pretty heads, side by side, were noticeable across the courtyard, in a window of the lower storey. They glanced inquisitively up, and smiled a greeting to Oscar and Elsa, when the latter returned to the window to close it, after Henneberg and the Koppels had passed into the parlour. Oscar and Elsa remained with their grandmother in the dining-room.

"If you would like to smoke, pray do," Koppel said, "my good Käthe has no objection."

Henneberg bowed, thanking Frau Käthe; he placed his coffee-cup on the mantel, detecting—with carefully concealed annoyance—an odour of chicory about it, drew out his silver cigar-case which had on it his full name, crosswise, in raised gold letters, and took out of it a corked glass tube in which was a cigar. Koppel looked on with curiosity, while with a tiny corkscrew



which hung at his belt-chain, he withdrew the cork and took the cigar out of its glass case.

"What kind of a performance is that?" he asked.

"At least it is a novelty. They say in this way the weed keeps its fragrance better. Won't you try one?" and Henneberg held out to him a second glass tube.

"Thank you; I think I prefer this," and Koppel hung in the corner of his mouth the short cherry-wood pipe which his wife had skilfully and affectionately filled for him.

"And you live here permanently, then?" Frau Käthe went on, resuming the conversation.

"Permanently? That I don't know. The most precious thing about independence is the chance that it gives a man to allow himself vagaries. But for the present, I am very well contented here. I have, in a degree, bound myself to remain. I am, like you, a slave to my abode. But now," continued Henneberg, "I have told you enough about my detestable self; now relate your history to me."

Koppel pulled reflectively at his pipe for some minutes, then he said:

"Really I have no history at all, since you and I lost sight of each other. Schoolmaster I was, schoolmaster I am, schoolmaster I shall remain. Venezuelan fairy-stories have never come into my life."

"Oh, nonsense! There is a certain amount of romance comes into every life. All you need is to look for it. Don't you see how fabulous it is that you and I here, as settled Parisian residents and tax payers, should be talking together; the same two men who, eleven years ago, had for occupation to contend with the sweet youth of a Berlin high school."

"Yes, that is true. This scene shifting was unexpected. It did not require much more, however, than on the old Shakesporean stage. A tablet inscribed, 'Wood and field,' is taken down, another with the words, 'Street before the Royal Palace,' is set up, and the play goes on smoothly. My work is the same as before; only my share in public life is denied me. That is the only difference."

"Do you miss the tobacco smoke and the odour of beer of the political gathering?"

"I do, very much."

"You are an impressive enthusiast. How did you get transported to Paris? You have not told me."

"Oh, don't you know? Nothing could have been more simple. You must remember my leaving the school?"

"Certainly, old friend. You were spotted as an industrious Socialist, and the choice was offered you, either to separate publicly from the destructionists, or to resign your position. You hesitated not one moment, but sent in your resignation. That was bravely done. Let me shake hands with you." And Henneberg stretched out his hand.

Koppel grasped it for an instant, and replied: "Every decent man in my place would have done the same. If there was any merit in the affair, it was Käthe's. It was her bread and the children's that I gave up, and if she had not been brave——"

"Do not praise me, dear Hugo," the wife broke in, "I would rather have had no bread, than that you should have relinquished your convictions."

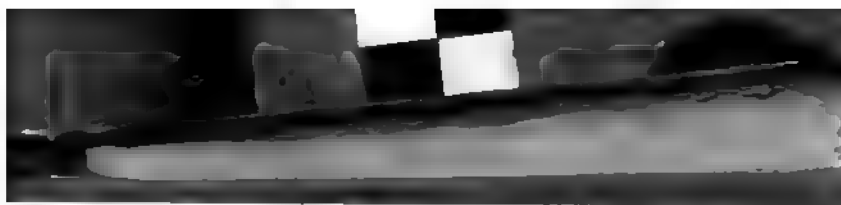
"Not every wife would say that," remarked Henneberg.

"I pity the woman who carries the consciousness that she is a burden or a shackle to her husband," Frau Käthe replied.

"Käthe's courage is all the more famous," Koppel continued, "because she has never shared at all in my Socialistic ideas. The sole aim of her curtain lectures has always been to bring me back to Conservatism."

"Oh, Hugo! curtain lectures!"

"Well!—in short, we were out of house and home. How to begin? In some newspaper of the party should I seek employment? That would perhaps have had some result, but we should have had very short commons, and there would have been the perpetual danger of being ordered to leave the country. In the midst of this distress I chanced one day to see in a paper an advertisement requiring for a German pri-



vate school, in another country, an experienced teacher of Greek and Latin, and also of History. I wrote at once to the address indicated, mentioning, of course, the reason why I had left the other school, and had the joy of being favourably received. And so we came to Paris."

"And here you have given up your socialistic activity?"

"That is the ridiculous point of the affair. For, as it has come out, I might as well have remained in Berlin. But here, to relinquish all share in politics brings with it no sacrifice of my self-respect."

"Whether you are prosperous here, I don't have to ask, since this very day I found you buying shares!"

Henneberg could not quite avoid the patronizing tone of the millionaire, as he said these words.

Koppel exchanged glances with his wife and answered, smiling: "You interpret that indication not quite correctly, perhaps. My wife has lately inherited a few thousand marks, and the money had to be invested. Don't make up your mind then that I can't make away with my enormous salary unless from time to time I make purchase of consols."

"I wish from my heart it were so. You are contented to live in Paris, gracious lady?"

"Where my husband is, that is my country, Herr Doctor. Within my four walls it doesn't make a great deal of difference to me whether the city has one name or another. It is true, the children are growing up here, and that causes us anxieties. Here, of course, they become French, and that is a very serious thing. And to prepare a future for them in Germany is, as we are situated, very difficult and very expensive."

Koppel had smoked his pipe out; he laid it aside, glanced at his watch, and rose.

"I beg a thousand pardons," he said, "but the school-bell calls the master."

Henneberg also rose suddenly. "Why, certainly," he said, "and I must go, myself. Shall I be permitted to take my leave of your dear mother?"

"If she has not already begun her nap," Frau Käthe said, and hastened to the door.

"I beg you will not awaken her, gracious lady," Henneberg called after her; but she had disappeared and came back with the old lady, who had been busy still in the dining-room and kitchen.

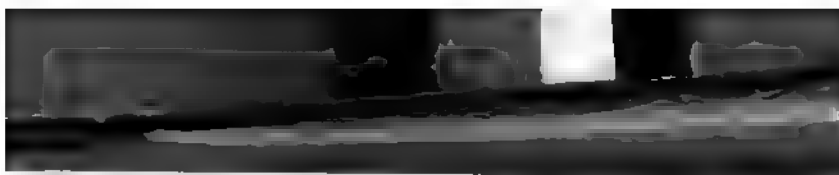
"What, Herr Doctor, were you going without bidding me good-bye? That was not kind. You must always take leave of old people, because you are never sure of seeing them alive another time."

Henneberg grasped the thin and wrinkled hand which Frau Koppel extended smilingly, and, while he pressed it gently, he said in a tone of extreme cordiality; "Gracious lady, you will remain with us many years yet."

"As God wills," she replied: "Give my best love to your dear young wife, and bring her, when you come again, will you not?"

Koppel was about to correct again his mother's persistent mistake as to the state of his friend, but Henneberg prevented him, by a sudden grasp of his arm. Turning to Frau Käthe, the parting guest said: "Good-bye, gracious lady, and many thanks; you have given me very precious hours to-day. It refreshes one and makes him young again, to breathe the air of such quiet domestic happiness for awhile." And to Koppel he said: "I have to take a cab. Can I set you down at your school?"

But Koppel replied: "Thank you; the school is very near and I am not sorry to walk a few steps after dinner. But I will go with you as far as the stand." And the two went away together, after Henneberg had promised Frau Käthe that he would come again very soon.



CHAPTER II.

LOST IN PARIS.

A FEW days after Henneberg's visit, as Koppel was loitering, one Saturday morning at about eleven o'clock, on his way from the school,—which was in the rue Vaugirard, opposite the Luxembourg,—to his home in the old, narrow cowpath of a street, rue Saint-André-des-Arts, as he reached the corner of that street and the rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie, his son Oscar ran against him, and—as soon as the boy could get his breath—exclaimed: "Papa, please, you must come home quickly."

Oscar was pale and excited; Koppel caught his hand and asked with great anxiety: "What is the matter? has anything happened?"

"I don't know," the boy answered: "I had just come in from school, and mamma sent me out straight to meet you."

Koppel wasted no further words but quickened his pace almost to a run, and in a few moments was at the door of the house. On the threshold of his loge, stood the concierge, a giant Alsatian, formerly one of the emperor's hundred horsemen of the Life-Guard, Knecht by name, called by his French neighbours, Knetsch.

Koppel stood still a moment. "What's happened?" he said.

"Go up stairs, Herr Koppel," replied the concierge. "It is something about your mother."

Koppel felt a sharp pain in his heart, and ran hastily up the stairs. He scarcely observed that, on the first floor, at the half-open door of their apartment, the two pretty little neighbour-girls were standing, and looked anxiously at him as he passed; now, he had reached his own door which stood open, and there in the ante-chamber were Frau Käthe and Elsa, both tearful.

"What is the matter?" he panted breathlessly.
"Where is my mother?"

His wife drew him into the parlour, and with difficulty controlling her voice, she said: "Dear mother went out early in the morning, and she has not yet come home."

"What do you mean? Not come home? Where is she, then? Don't torture me, Käthe; tell me the whole. Did she meet with an accident in the street?"

"I hope not," Frau Käthe answered; "but I don't know where she is."

"Where did she go?"

"She went out as usual in the morning with her basket on her arm. She was to go to the baker, and the but-terman, and the butcher; and she has not yet come back."

"Where are these shops?"

"They are all here in this street."

"Did you go to inquire?"

"Of course I did. Mother went out soon after eight. At nine o'clock, when she had not come in, I noticed it; at half-past nine, I became anxious and went down to inquire. She had not been at any one of the three places."

"Had none of the neighbours seen her?"

"Yes; the woman in the tobacco-shop opposite was quite sure she had seen her go by with her basket."

"She cannot have got lost, with such a short distance to go."

"It's a riddle to me; nothing can have happened to her, for that would have made a disturbance, and every body must have known of it."

"It is inconceivable; why did you not send to me immediately?"

"Because I was expecting every moment to see her come in. She cannot have lost her way, in a street that she has lived in for eleven years."

Koppel took out his watch. "Over three hours away, when she had gone out to do a few errands here in this street. Something must have happened to her."



I will go to the police-station. That seems to me to be the next thing I can do."

"I have already spoken to the two patrolmen who are in this street and in the rue de Buci. They would make inquiries, they said, and would mention it at the station. But I have heard nothing from them."

Koppel had taken his hat down from the stand, and he turned toward the door.

"May I go with you?" asked Frau Käthe anxiously.

"And I?" said Elsa, who had been standing by the door with Oscar.

"That is not worth while," the father said, "it is better for you both to stay here, so that if she comes back there will be some one in the house."

Frau Käthe looked down, and sighed deeply.

"Does Martha know in what shops mother usually buys?"

Martha was a Luxembourg girl, who spoke both French and German.

"Oh yes."

"I will have her come with me."

Martha was summoned and bidden to lay aside her apron and put on her shawl as quickly as possible. She obeyed, grumbling, but Koppel took no notice, and went hastily down stairs with her.

He went first to the baker's shop, and the stout wife of the baker, from behind her marble counter, called out, as soon as she recognized the maid:

"Is it about the old German lady?"

"Yes; my mother," answered Koppel.

A sympathetic shadow came over the woman's cheerful fat face: "Oh! and hasn't she got back yet?" she asked.

"No. Has she not been here?"

"I am so sorry. I have already told Madame that we have not seen the old lady this morning at all."

"Would you have been sure to see her, if she came in?"

"Oh, certainly! We all know her here in the shop. My man always jokes with her. She speaks German

and he, French, and then both laugh. Such a pleasant old lady!"

Koppel listened in silence; then said briefly, "Thank you," and went out. "I wish you good luck," the baker's wife called after him. "And keep up your courage!"

At the butcher's and at the creamery, it was the same thing. Everywhere great sympathy was expressed, and every one sought to encourage him that all would yet be well. So much kind feeling expressed by strangers was a comfort to him. It seemed to inspire him with renewed hope, though it brought him in no way nearer to his object.

He sent the maid back, and went on alone. At the corner of the rue de Buci, he met the patrolman on his beat. He stopped the man and inquired if anything had been heard of the old lady for whom her family were seeking.

"What old lady?" The policeman said, and looked distrustfully at Koppel.

"Has no one told you that an old lady from the rue Saint-André-des-Arts, has disappeared ——"

"I don't know anything about it. I have only been here since eleven, and the man whom I relieved said nothing to me. If you want to hear any thing more, you must go to the police station."

This advice Koppel followed. The station, recognisable by a red lantern and by a flag, consisted of two smoky rooms. In the first one, which had an iron stove and some wooden benches, a few policemen stood or sat about, with an air of extreme fatigue; in the second, a little cleaner and somewhat better furnished than the other, an officer was seated at a writing-table. To this person Koppel was directed, when he inquired of the policemen in the outer room, for the officer in charge.

Koppel made known his case, adding that the patrolmen on duty had probably mentioned it when they came in.

"Nothing has been mentioned here," the officer said, curtly; with that he picked up a pen, and began

to write down, in a very large book which lay before him, the answers which Koppel made to questions on the subject. The officer inquired about the residence, the name, and the age of the missing person; had her personal appearance and her dress described to him, and the hour of her disappearance given. This being ended, he remarked: "Very well! When we know anything about the case, we will communicate with you."

Koppel could not persuade himself to go away immediately. "What do you propose to do?" he asked.

The man glanced up sharply, and replied: "All that is needful."

"Pardon me if I ask you to tell me what that will be."

"Your description will be telegraphed to the prefecture. The report as to all persons found in the streets is also made at the prefecture, and if your mother should be heard of in this way, we shall be notified."

"Shall I come again to see if you have any news of her?"

"You may, if you like."

"Is there nothing that I can do?"

"You can search in the streets where you think it possible your mother may be, and if you find her, you can take her home."

Koppel looked the man in the face. No. The other was not making a jest of his mortal anguish. This extraordinary answer was the natural product of the man's mental ability, which could plainly enough be estimated by his vacant look and his stupid mien. He paid no further attention to Koppel, but turned to a woman who, meanwhile, had come in.

Koppel left the station and went slowly homeward. The nearer he came to his dwelling, the more rapid became his step. The hope was growing within him that, in the meantime, his mother had returned, and would come, smiling, to meet him. So confident became his expectation of this, that he almost cheerfully called out to the concierge as he went by: "Well,

has mother come in?" But Herr Knecht shook only a negative, with his huge head.

Frau Käthe and the children sat silent in the parlour, like mourners returned from the funeral after some dear relative has been buried. They started up when Koppel entered and fixed their eyes upon him eagerly.

"Nothing," he said, in a dull voice, and dropped into a chair, while Elsa took his hat and overcoat. Frau Käthe silently wrung her hands. After a few minutes' silence, he detailed the steps he had taken. It was now noon, and the maid came in, asking if she should serve dinner. Upon this, Frau Käthe almost lost her self-control. How could one think of eating, in circumstances like this! But Koppel said: "Let us have dinner. There is no use in sitting idly here, and the children will be hungry."

Martha had set the table as usual, for the old lady as well. The sight of the vacant place at the father's right hand, between him and Elsa, produced a painful effect upon them all. It was as if they saw a ghost there. A cold chill passed over Koppel. Where, at this moment, was the poor old lady? Where was she wandering up and down, lost? Where was she lying in agony,—perhaps stunned,—or perhaps already dead? He sought to banish the idea, unconsciously shaking his head, but it would not depart. Would his mother ever again sit in this chair, at this table? It clutched his throat like a fierce hand. And yet he had not the heart to cause this significant gap to disappear by bringing Elsa's chair nearer to his own, for it seemed as if this would be a symbolic action by which he accepted the changed situation. An old lady is lost; those who remain close up the broken rank; and life moves on, as if the missing one had never been. Oh, no! that was impossible. No one can disappear in broad daylight in a great city, and no trace of the lost person be found. It must be that he should have his mother here again.

From the antechamber the bell sounded, suddenly. They all ran to the door. There she is, surely!



Martha was there as soon as the rest, and tore open the door. Alas! it was only the little daughter of the concierge bringing a German paper, for which Koppel was a subscriber. The family went slowly back into the dining-room. Scarcely anything was eaten; scarcely a word was said. Koppel did not take off the wrapper of the German paper, which it was his custom to read at table. And when the cheese was brought in, he no longer could endure to remain in the house.

"I am going over to school," he said, "to excuse myself for the rest of the day. Then I shall go again on the search."

Oscar seized his father's hand. "And I cannot possibly go to school this afternoon," he said pleadingly.

"You are right; stay here with your mother;" and turning to his wife, Koppel added: "I shall come in every little while, to see if there is any news."

"Yes," Frau Käthe answered in a broken voice: "please do not leave us very long alone."

At one o'clock, Koppel was again at the police-station. At the writing-table in the inner room, there was now another official, a thin and smiling person, in place of the other, stout and surly. Koppel asked if any news had been brought in; the man knew nothing about the matter, and required to be told that Koppel was seeking his mother. Then he took up a pen, inquired the name and residence, personal appearance, and hour when the old lady had last been seen, and was about to write the answer in the same big book. Koppel interrupted him: "Pardon me, all this has been already done."

"Is that so?" replied the officer, and turned the leaves; then finding the statement, exclaimed:

"Yes, here it is. Very well, monsieur, very well. Now then, everything is as it should be."

Koppel was much displeased at this. "I should like to know," he said, "what has been done in the matter."

"My colleague has without doubt reported it to the officer of the district. You may be quite at ease."

"Reported it to the officer of the district? I thought it was to the prefecture that the report would be made." Koppel was by no means at ease.

"No. Later, it will go to the prefecture." And as he saw Koppel's distress, he added kindly: "If you like, I will make a second announcement. Be tranquil, monsieur, be tranquil."

Koppel said: "Thank you," and took leave of the cheerful officer.

What next? He stood still for a moment and thought about it. Since nothing further was done here than to notify the district station, he could think of nothing better to do than to go thither himself. The place was much more pretentious in its aspect. From a very large hall, which opened directly from the street, at the right opened the office of the Secretary, at the left that of the Commissary of police. The man to whom Koppel explained his errand directed him to the Secretary.

"You have doubtless heard from the police-station of the rue de Buci that Frau Koppel, my mother, has been missing, since early this forenoon."

The Secretary picked up the sheet of paper which lay on the table, looked it through and then said: "We have received no notification to that effect."

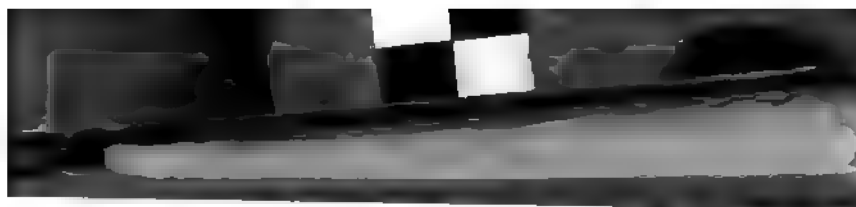
Koppel was furious, but he remembered in time that, as a foreigner, as a German, he had no right to express impatience at the administration of a country not his own, and he only replied with a tremulous voice: "I was told, however, expressly, that whatever was needful would be done."

"What have you yourself done, thus far?"

Koppel narrated the steps he had taken.

"Very good," answered the official, "nothing has been neglected."

Thereupon he opened a large book, addressed to Koppel the same questions, as to the name, age, residence and personal appearance of his mother, and having written all this down, he rose from his seat, say-



ing: "To-day is Saturday." He apparently went through a little mental process of calculation and resumed: "You will come again Tuesday, and sign the minutes of the disappearance."

"Is this all," cried Koppel bitterly, "that the police can do to help me find my mother?"

"Yes, what do you expect done? The law must be obeyed. If a person disappears, minutes of the disappearance must be made. Accordingly, you will come Tuesday and affix your signature to this document, otherwise there will be trouble."

Koppel bowed silently and went out. As if he had been beaten over the head, his brain a chaos of confused ideas, stupified, he made his way homeward. The occurrence had, meanwhile, been made known all along the street where he lived, through the gossip of maid-servants and concierges: and as Koppel passed along, with depressed air and vacant look, all the little tradeswomen of the neighbourhood came to their doors and looked sympathetically after him. On the ground-floor of the house in which he lived, the concierge, with his family about him, stood waiting. "Is there nothing?" asked Koppel, before he entered. "Nothing," answered the tall Alsatian. Koppel stood still, on the sidewalk. His first impulse was to go away again, and resume his search at random, with a hope that some happy chance might help him. Then it occurred to him that this would be unkind towards the others, and he went up stairs.

They were still sitting together, silent, as before: but the anxiety had deepened in their faces, and their eyes were more tearful. Frau Käthe dared not ask a question of her husband, and it was some minutes before Koppel could pull himself together sufficiently to tell them very briefly what he had been doing.

Frau Käthe was the first to make an effort to rise above the extreme discouragement which they all felt. When she saw that Koppel again picked up his hat and rose from his chair, she laid her hand gently on his shoulder, and said: "Hugo, there is no use in walking the streets; and the police are doing nothing

for us, as far as I can see. Let us talk it over reasonably, what there is that we could do."

They discussed all sorts of possibilities, which, hitherto, they had not done at all. Could it be that the mother had merely lost her way? That seemed to be almost impossible. She would not willingly have continued to wander about the streets for six hours. Her strength would not admit of this. She had with her some money for the purchases to be made. She knew the name of the street where they lived. She would have taken a fiacre, if she had become aware that she could not find her way. Or if, being tired, she had gone in somewhere, into a shop, a house, the waiting-room of a line of omnibuses, she would have inquired her way, and some decent person would have come home with her. It was impossible to suppose she was merely lost. Had some attack of illness happened to her in the street? That certainly would have become known to the police. Could it possibly have happened outside their district? But how could the old lady have been so far away? Still, this seemed to be the only theory at all tenable. The poor old lady had, perhaps, first wandered away from familiar streets, was then completely fatigued, and then, in some remote street, far from her home—yes! surely, it must be that. If a person drops in the street, helpless and ill, without doubt he is at once carried to a hospital. In this direction Koppel must search for his mother. But anything that had happened to her must be quite serious, so that she was not able to give her name and residence, and ask to be carried home, or, at least, if that were impossible, send word to her family what had happened to her.

"But perhaps not," Frau Käthe suggested, consolingly. "She may have been unconscious for a time, and when she was able to send a messenger, he may have been for hours strolling about, these people are so careless; and so, a stupid attendant or hospital errand boy has perhaps been the cause of all this dreadful anxiety that we are enduring."

Koppel was not really convinced, but it gave him a



certain relief that he again had some definite aim in view, and that his thoughts and efforts were not absolutely without plan or direction. The immediate duty lay before him to search in hospitals. But in what hospitals? The most reasonable thing to do was to go to the general bureau of administration of all the hospitals, where notification was at once given when any patient had been received at any one of them. He went out, a little less downcast than he had entered, and rapidly directed his steps towards the not very distant avenue Victoria.

The day, whose collective sum of accidents, sudden illnesses, and deaths was to be investigated, was peculiarly dismal. The sun was so densely shadowed that not the faintest gleam of light gave any idea of its place in the sky. There were no clouds, whose freakishly changing form and varying light and shade lend to the sky its attractive and consoling look, its character of height and open space which uplifts the human heart; the sky was like a low, flat roof, coated with a dull, yellowish-gray, mud-coloured paint. As the day wore on, this oppressive roof seemed to sink down in an alarming way, as though it would at last crush whatever was between it and the ground. The same colour of plastered mud met the eye from underfoot; the ground was wet and slippery like the bottom of a drained pond, and splashed up beneath the tread. It almost seemed as if the endless, thin sheets of the incessant rain were not falling at all, but were rising from below and polluting the sky with the liquid filth of the great city gutters. Over all things animate and inanimate there seemed to be diffused a certain repulsive ill temper that was more intolerable than an equally profound melancholy. The houses dripped, the windows stared black, and as if malicious, upon the street. The drooping horses were coated, breast high, with mud. The drivers of vehicles sat under the weight of their bulbous cloaks, their necks sunken out of sight between their shoulders. Pedestrians, some with waterproof hoods over their heads, some sheltered under umbrellas, went grimly along, each besprinkled or be-

splashed by his neighbor, and looked at each other like enemies. It was not really cold, but the heavy, damp air seemed to penetrate the clothing and even the shivering skin to the very bones, and give even the healthiest person a sort of chill.

Koppel became again extremely discouraged. It seemed that this leaden day, which took away all hope, could never be succeeded by a brighter one. He observed a lean, shaggy dog without a collar, trotting before him, who looked as if he had been dragged through a morass. But the dog sought all across the wide sidewalk the cleaner places for his dripping feet, and avoided the deeper puddles whenever he could—a sight at once droll and pathetic.

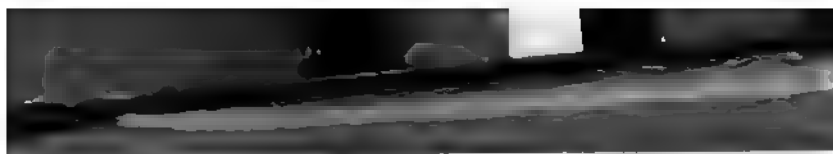
“And my mother,” Koppel thought, “may be wandering through the streets at this moment, like this poor dog,—her clothes wringing wet, muddy to the eyes, vainly avoiding the puddles, and feeling forlorn and forsaken, like this masterless dog. And the men who pass her by, hit her with their umbrellas, under which they hide, like masked evil-doers; she feels as if she were in the frightful solitude of some trackless wood, only that the solitude of the great city is more dreadful, because of the crowd of inaccessible human beings who threaten her.”

He had reached the huge stone palace of the society for public charity in the avenue Victoria, and he was introduced by a solemn looking servant, in a blue cloth frock-coat with metal buttons, into a long hall on the ground floor, which was divided in halves by a wooden railing. A young man behind the railing listened to him silently, and then replied: “We receive notice here from the hospitals, of the entrances and departures, always in the morning, for the preceding day,—the twenty-four hours from midnight to midnight. Of anything that occurs to-day, we do not hear until to-morrow morning.”

To-morrow morning! A whole night of this cruel uncertainty to be endured!

“And how early can I come in the morning?”

“Excuse me. To-morrow you cannot come, for it



is Sunday. On Monday, however, at about eleven o'clock, we shall have the lists."

"Can I not in some way see to-day's lists in the morning, to-morrow? I should be glad to give a *pourboire* to any servant or concierge. You might thus shorten by twenty-four hours the distress of a family."

"Impossible. You would find no one here to-morrow." When he saw the misery of Koppel's face, the clerk added with sympathy: "But you might attempt to obtain information yourself, at the different hospitals. If the lady was taken ill anywhere in your neighbourhood she would be carried either to the Charité, or to the Hôtel Dieu, or else to the Pitié. You can go and inquire."

The advice was useful. Koppel hurriedly gave the friendly clerk the desired description of his mother,—which the young man entered in a book,—and was soon again in the street. He made inquiries first at the Hôtel Dieu. The official who had the list of persons received, informed him that, during the day, no Frau Koppel and no unknown patient had been received. A woman, senseless, had been brought in to the Charité, who seemed to have been attacked with apoplexy. Koppel's heart stood still as he hastened to the ward where the unknown person lay. But from the door he could see that it was not his mother. Who knows, he thought, but over this human wreck, a whole family are at this moment in deadly distress! But his own anxiety quickly banished all thought for others' sufferings. At the Pitié, he also found nothing which concerned him. Again he had come up against a blank wall, and could see no further steps. Would it be well for him to go to the twelve or fifteen other hospitals of Paris? But how could it be that his mother could have been a half an hour's or an hour's walk away from home?

"You would do well to inquire at the insane-ward of the police-prison," the functionary at the Pitié said to him.

"At the police-prison?" said Koppel, excitedly.

"Certainly. Old people sometimes lose their senses

suddenly. And then the police take them at once to the insane-ward."

Ever blacker and more dreadful grew the outlook before Koppel's eyes. He followed, however, this *via dolorosa*.

At the remote end of the inner courtyard of the police prefecture he was directed to a little entrance, closed by a heavy, iron-bound oaken door. Over this melodramatic dungeon door was legible the inscription : *Infirmierie du dépôt.*" Koppel pulled the bell, and a large bell broke into a tumult of sound, before which the man who sought entrance shrank appalled. The door opened, and an official appeared on the threshold.

"What do you wish?" he said.

Koppel, commanding his voice with difficulty, narrated his errand. He could not have told, at that moment, whether he would rather not find his mother at all, or find her here. The man bade him come in. He entered a somewhat dark, low room, which had in it some wooden benches secured firmly to the floor.

"Here we have all the persons who have been brought in up to noon. Look for yourself," the official said.

Three figures were seated on the benches : a young man with the suspicious, irritable look of the insane person who believes himself tracked by foes ; a well-dressed woman, who sat crying quietly, her tears continuously running down into the feather boa that she wore round her neck ; and a strong-built middle-aged woman, with disordered clothing, fiery red face, and flashing eyes, who was talking loudly, gesticulating with violence, and repeatedly springing from her seat, to be forced back again by a second man in charge, who stood in front of her.

Koppel, unconsciously breathed a sigh of relief. "And since noon?" he asked.

"Since noon we have had four persons, all French, and able to give their names."

"What would be done with any sick persons brought in later?"



"They remain here until the Doctor sees them and gives orders."

"Will you let me know at once, if my mother should be brought in? I shall be very glad to pay for a cab for the messenger, and to compensate you for your trouble; and I should be most grateful to you."

The man promised willingly; he tore a leaf from a memorandum book, and made a note of the name, residence, personal appearance, etc., and somewhat inconsiderately, expressed the hope that he might be of service to Koppel.

As the heavy door swung to and locked itself behind him, and he once more stood in the court-yard, the thought occurred to him that this was the place to which all police-returns from the whole city were sent in. Here or nowhere, could he find news of his mother. He hastened to the doorkeeper, a haughty person with ribbons and medals on his breast, and asked eagerly to which functionary he must address the inquiries he wished to make.

"It is not here," replied the lofty porter, "but in the other building of the prefecture of police."

The place was a few steps distant on the river-bank. Koppel entered a vast courtyard, surrounded on all sides by arcades. In the courtyard stood about a hundred horses, and, among them, separately or in groups, guardsmen, some in full uniform, others in the drilling-jacket of grooms. Men on foot and on horseback were coming and going at every moment, and uniforms of mounted police, municipal guards, horse-guards and soldiers of the line, were mingled with citizens' dress and the costume of under-officials. There was a moving crowd in the courtyard, in the arcades, on the stairs, at the gateway, as around the entrance of a bee-hive.

All these men coming and going had some errand, with each of them the prefecture must occupy itself; what chance for attention could remain over for a man, poor, unknown, no longer young, who, alone and anxious in the human wilderness of the vast city, was feeling his way in any direction? And yet this man

was embittered against the police, who, since morning either could not or would not do anything for him, and, notwithstanding the conviction of his reason, his excited feeling found their obtuseness revolting.

Upon his statement of his errand, the porter said to him,—without honouring him with a glance, and already turning towards another inquirer: “*Chef des Personals*, first section, first bureau.” It was not easy to find the individual designated, especially to one not familiar with the complicated building. With the aid of many signs along the walls, and with assistance from the marvellously numerous lounging servants, he attained—after wandering through long passages and over many stairs—his goal.

He found himself in a large, handsomely furnished room, in the presence of a high official, who with a politeness and affability, corresponding to his rank, received the new comer. After having patiently and with courteous mien heard the story out, he took his pen, and said: “Have the goodness to repeat to me some of your statements.”

“Excuse me, but has the case not been reported to you?”

“Not as yet.”

“The commissary of police in my district assured me that it should be reported at once.”

“At what o’clock was this?”

“It was three hours ago.”

Not a shade of change crossed the friendly face of the *chef*; nor did he think best to make any answer to Koppel’s last remark; but he said dryly: “What is the lady’s name?”

Koppel went through his litany once more, and could not resist adding: “This is perhaps the tenth time to-day that I have dictated a description of my mother.”

“At least, this has done no harm,” the official said with invincible friendliness. When he ceased writing he added: “It is very fortunate that madame your mother speaks no French. That makes the case ex-



ceptional, you see, and will render it much easier to find her."

"But how is it possible that for eight hours I have no trace of her? She cannot have been in the street all this time. Whatever has happened to her, she must have been noticed somewhere, there must have been some information lodged about her."

The official made no answer; but he inquired: "Have you been in the hospitals?"

"Oh, yes; that is to say, in those of my district and the one adjacent."

The official nodded approvingly. "And in the Morgue?" he said.

Koppel's heart stood still. He was conscious that this idea, remote and vague, had already occurred to himself; and that he had not had the strength to make it more distinct. He grew very pale, and said, in a low voice: "No."

"Well, then, you ought to go," the other went on, still in his pleasant voice; "and, on our part, we will do all we can for you."

"May I ask what you propose to do?"

"I shall communicate with all the commissaries of the districts, and desire them to make special search. If the lady has not left Paris—"

"Why should she leave Paris?"

—"you will very soon have news of her."

Koppel expressed his thanks; the official rose to bid him good-bye; and Koppel slowly left the room. It was his intention to walk as far as the Morgue, but his legs were like lead. He called a fiacre, and took it by the hour. As the vehicle rolled easily along by the full, yellow-gray Seine, and the rain beat more and more violently against the window, so that he could scarcely see through the glass, he seemed to see his mother with the basket on her arm, slowly and dead-tired, dragging herself in this cruel storm through the fathomless mud of the streets, and his conscience almost stung him, that he, meanwhile, should be comfortable and dry in his fiacre.

He had soon arrived before the long, low building

behind Nôtre-Dame, which the hangman's mirth of the common people call the Ice Palace, because the dead awaiting recognition are kept there on ice. He got out and stood for a few minutes before he had strength to go up the three steps. He was breathless, and the drops of sweat came out on his forehead. But he must conquer this weakness. After he had entered the hall where, behind a wall of glass, on slanting, lead-covered tables lie the dead, their clothes removed and hanging against the white-washed wall, above their heads, he had not the courage, for a few minutes, to look at the rigid forms. He noticed indistinctly that some of the tables were not occupied, that the bodies, over which a thin stream of water dripped from a faucet above, were shining-wet, and that against the bar, which in front of the glass, went the length of the place, some men and women of the lower class were standing or leaning, and through the panes were gazing at what lay on the other side. As soon as his confusion and distress permitted, he looked round for a servant or official of whom he could ask a question; and, keeping his head still turned away from the glass wall, he perceived at the extreme left a door with the sign: Secretary's Office. He hastened to enter, and was received by a fat little man, whose health and cheerfulness were written upon his rosy face.

"Has there been an old lady brought in to-day, with a blue cloth dress—"

"There has nothing been brought in to-day, so far," interrupted the Secretary, with a loud voice that rang like a trumpet in the little, over-heated room.

Koppel could have fallen upon the neck of this domineering person. He drew a long breath. It was like coming out of a cave into the open air, with sunlight already breaking through the clouds. The official noticed the effect of his words and he inquired, still in his lordly tone, in which, however, there was a certain expression of sympathy: "Have you lost somebody?"

Koppel related his story. The other listened; then asked, when Koppel had ended: "I suppose you



would like, if anything comes in, that we should let you know, before we expose it?"

Koppel begged that he would do this, and was obliged once more to give a description, and when it had been entered in a book, the Secretary dismissed him, saying with the same powerful voice: "Now, you can depend upon us. And if you find the lost person, let us know, that we may erase this entry. The public is so inconsiderate. People never think of letting us know, and so we have unnecessary trouble."

When he again stood in the hall Koppel was quite a different man. He had now the strength to glance at the bodies which lay on the tables. There were five,—four men and a woman, melancholy wrecks flung upon the strand by the Paris-ocean. But happy though he was that he had no dreadful discovery to apprehend, he still felt the shudder that had passed over him at the thought that his mother might be lying here, her poor form exposed to the eyes of the indifferent gazer.

He called out his residence to the cabman, leaned back in a corner and shut his eyes. A peculiar hopeful gladness came over him suddenly. While he, with inexpressible anxiety, had sought her in the Morgue, very probably his mother had already been for some time safe at home! The thought grew to a fixed conviction in his mind. Very probably? No; most certainly,—his mother awaited him at home! How wonderful are presentiments, he thought; a certainty so sudden, so without cause, yet so unquestionable, had come over him!

At the door of the house he got out of the fiacre and went in to see the concierge. He had no doubt that this man, or some of his family, would rush to meet him with joyful faces, crying out before they came near: "She has come back!"

Frau Knecht was the first person whom he saw.

"Well?" he exclaimed, confidently, almost cheerfully.

"Nothing!" she answered.

All the castles in the air which his imagination had

built fell to pieces. As if struck by lightning he stood for a moment motionless; then slowly and without a word left the room. He took a few steps towards the stairs, then turned, and went back to the carriage. He had not the courage to go up. All his former restlessness came back upon him, and besides, something like shame at appearing before his family without bringing the lost one with him. He seemed to himself very small and insignificant, without influence, without power; he was nothing and could do nothing; what he did was immaterial; what he said was the buzzing of flies. It seemed to him as if he must hide his deep abasement in solitude and darkness.

"Whither, patron?" asked the cabman. This snatched him from his gloomy meditation. Yes, whither? That the authorities would not make the slightest effort in his behalf, had become perfectly clear to him. To get the better of their indifference he must have some very efficient aid from without. But how to obtain it? Should he ask help from Wolzen? The proprietor of the school had many acquaintances, but his was an arid, unsympathetic nature, and probably there was very little that he could do, if he should feel inclined, which was far from certain. The German embassy? But in the eleven years that he had lived in Paris, Koppel had made no approaches to the representative of his native country; the circumstances by reason of which he had abandoned the Fatherland had left him little inclination to come into relations with official Germany. This he had reason now to regret. How would he be received at the embassy? It was now five o'clock; office-hours were over; he would probably find no one there, and some servant would advise him to come to-morrow, or possibly not before Monday. And this would not bring help to the need of the moment. Never had his complete isolation in Paris been so grievous to him as now. He felt like a man from a wreck, alone in a little boat upon the ocean. The two and a half millions of human beings who, with incessant motion and noise, surrounded him, seemed to him like so many drops of



water, and an appeal to them as insane as it would be to seek sympathy from the waves of the ocean which, cold and unheeding, splashed, incessant, upon the shore. Not a friend had he!

Suddenly, the idea of Henneberg came to his mind. He was ready to reproach himself that the thought had not occurred to him before. "Rue de Téhéran!" he called to the cabman. As a matter of fact he had not been extremely intimate with Henneberg in Berlin. They had had simply the friendly relations which naturally spring up between two persons of about the same age and in the same position. Koppel being married, while Henneberg remained a bachelor, the latter often came to Koppel's of an evening to pass the hours with serious talk and light refreshment. The joy of the unexpected meeting in Paris had, however, called up in Koppel's mind an exaggerated recollection of their earlier acquaintance, and it now seemed to him as if, in the old days in Berlin, he had had no nearer friend. "How unfriendly of me," he thought, "that I had not returned his visit earlier! And what a just punishment that I must now go to him, seeking help!"

If only Henneberg would be at home! All safety seemed to him to depend upon this. It was now dark, the street-lamps were lighted, and the rain poured steadily on. How intolerably slow the cab crept on! Again and again Koppel put out his head, and by the promise of a liberal *pourboire* endeavoured to stimulate the driver. The latter, however, grumbled something about the slippery pavement and his tired horse, and kept on without increase of speed.

Finally the cab stopped before the designated number in the rue de Téhéran. It was a very handsome house, with a broad entrance; the room of the concierge was brilliantly lighted and very spacious, with oriental divans and comfortable armchairs; the concierge himself, a man with the shaven lips and chin and luxuriant side-whiskers of a solicitor-general, and an embroidered velvet cap upon his dignified head; the

stairs, shut in with glass, were heated, and covered with a rich carpet held down by brass rods.

Henneberg occupied the first floor. A servant opened the door when Koppel rang the bell, and conducted him through a large antechamber adorned with plants, and through a very elegant drawing-room, into a smaller room opening at the left, and asked for his name. Was Monsieur Henneberg at home? He would see. Until the servant returned, Koppel had time to look around him. He was, however, in too much excitement, to notice separate things; but he received a general impression that, with rugs and portières and window-curtains, with oriental furniture, objects of vertu, pictures and bronzes, the room was like a jewel-box. In a few minutes, one of the portières was lightly pushed aside, and Henneberg came in smiling, with outstretched hand: "This is good, dear friend," he began; but he broke off, suddenly, as he saw Koppel's aspect, and exclaimed: "What is it?"

Koppel grasped the other's hand and held it tight, as he answered with a broken voice:

"Mother has disappeared, since early this morning."

"What do you mean? 'Disappeared?'"

Koppel gave him the details and described briefly all the steps that he had taken in search of her. Henneberg became also greatly moved, and leading him into another salon, much larger, which was adjacent, made him sit down on a sofa. The hours of anxiety, fatigue and hopelessness did their work. Koppel's power of endurance was at an end, and as he finished speaking he broke down and began sobbing violently. Henneberg laid his hand on the other's shoulder:

"Take courage, my poor friend," he said; "all is not lost."

"You do not know," Koppel said, with choking voice, "what my mother is, and what she has done and suffered for me."

"I can sympathize with you fully," Henneberg rejoined; "I also had a mother who was everything to me, and to whom I owe everything. And I had not



the happiness of being able to show her my gratitude. But what do you propose to do?" he added, after a moment.

"You are my last hope."

"I?"

"You have very influential friends, who perhaps know the prefect of police or one of the ministers; what I hope is that, in some way, the police may be stimulated to greater activity."

"Hm! Yes. Perhaps. Let me see." He rose from his seat and paced the room silently for a few minutes. Suddenly he stopped before Koppel. "I have a plan. We will try."

He touched an electric bell and the servant stood in the doorway.

"Have the horse put in at once."

"I have a cab below," Koppel interrupted.

"Pay the man," Henneberg said to the servant.

"But——" Koppel again broke in.

"And dismiss him," Henneberg continued, without noticing Koppel's interruption; and when the servant had gone, he said: "We shall get on faster with my carriage. Excuse me for a moment." He disappeared and returned almost immediately in an overcoat with the parti-coloured rosette of an Order in the buttonhole. "I am ready," he said, and went towards the door. In the antechamber the servant handed him a stick, in whose chiselled gold top a very small watch was inserted, a smooth, tall hat, and a pair of new gloves. Koppel began asking the servant what he had paid the cabman, but Henneberg briskly pulled him along, saying in German: "Don't be so childish."

In the entrance-way stood the coupé, with its splendid bay in silver-mounted harness. The dignified concierge stood in his doorway and pulled off his cap respectfully as Henneberg appeared. A servant opened the carriage door instantly, then closed it softly behind the two. Henneberg said a few words to him, which the latter repeated to the coachman, and the carriage passed out into the street. The interior of the coupé corresponded to its outward appearance; the windows

were of plate-glass, the cushions and sides were of brown morocco, the little mirror was rimmed with oxydized silver, and the ash-tray beneath it was of the same metal. Koppel had not a long time in which to admire these splendours. The finely extravagant and fleet trot of the thoroughbred brought the carriage quickly to its destination, a very large, elegant private house in the rue Fortuny.

"Is the baron at home?" Henneberg asked, as they entered the vestibule.

The lackey who advanced to meet him wore an extremely rich livery: a dark blue coat with silver stripes and brandebourgs, a scarlet waistcoat, light blue breeches, and stockings of white silk.

The servant replied that his master was out, but Madame la Baronne was at home.

"Announce me, please," Henneberg said, and at once began going up the stairs, followed by Koppel, while the lackey hastened on before, and whispering a few words to another servant who came towards them, he lifted a portière for the two men to enter, while the other vanished into some inner room.

Henneberg, who had seemed perfectly at home, and had neither taken off his overcoat nor laid down his hat and stick, went on through a first and second salon into a kind of boudoir beyond, where the lady of the house came forward to meet him, extending her hand, which he bent to kiss. In German, he said to her: "Permit me to present to you a fellow-countryman, my friend Doctor Koppel—"

Koppel and the lady both suddenly paused an instant, as they met each other's eyes, and looked fixedly at one another,—Koppel, puzzled and hesitating; the lady, surprised. Henneberg noticed this singular effect of his introduction, but he forbore to inquire about it.

The lady put an end to this embarrassment, as she gave her hand cordially to Koppel: "I see," she said, "that you know me. You are not mistaken. Baroness Agostini is, as you think, Fräulein Hausblum, the

poor German teacher who came to you ten years ago, and was so kindly received by you."

"For whom, unhappily, I could do nothing," Koppel stammered.

"That was from no lack of good will," she said, smilingly; "but sit down, and tell me to what I owe the honour of your visit."

Henneberg replied for his friend, and told the story.

"The dear old lady!" exclaimed the baroness, extremely shocked and affected, "that is most dreadful! What is your idea? What is it that I can do?"

"The baron undoubtedly is acquainted with the prefect of police," said Henneberg.

"Oh certainly," answered the baroness eagerly, "and so am I. He has often dined with us."

"That is good!" Henneberg said. "I came with the idea of asking the baron to interest the prefect in my friend's behalf. It is unfortunate that we do not find him at home."

"He must be at home before seven, to dress for dinner," the baroness said, "but naturally you would not be willing to wait till then."

"Of course, the case is urgent," Henneberg said; and the tears gathered again in Koppel's eyes and began to fall slowly.

The baroness started up. "The baron is probably now at his club. Let us go and try to find him, and if we do not, I will go myself with you to the prefect's."

"Will you do that?" Koppel said, with emotion.

"Indeed I will. I will not leave you without help in such a case as this is. I will be ready as soon as possible." And she glided swiftly from the room.

The baroness Agostini was a beautiful woman about thirty years of age, who, under any circumstances, must have made an impression. At this moment, to Koppel, she seemed like a creature from a nobler world, with her tall and vigorous, yet slender figure, her proud head with its masses of dark hair, her great brilliant dark eyes, her classically correct, rather long,

nose, and her imperious mouth whose smile revealed faultless teeth. A victorious and tranquillizing influence seemed to radiate from her. Whatever this strong woman with the light, resolute motion, the masterful eyes, and the clear, positive speech, took in hand, could not, it seemed, fail of success.

"Now we are all right," Henneberg whispered, when the two men were alone; "then you knew the baroness?"

"Oh, very slightly, and it is so long ago; I never should have recognized her had she not been a person so extraordinary in appearance and character. But what is she now? or rather, what is her husband?"

Henneberg could not but smile. "If you were not so entirely out of the world," he said, "you could not help knowing that baron Agostini is one of the foremost figures in the high finance. He is the president of the French Oriental bank; he has uncounted millions and unlimited influence. I have taken you to the right shop, depend upon it."

Koppel grasped warmly his friend's hand, then sank back in a silence which the other respected.

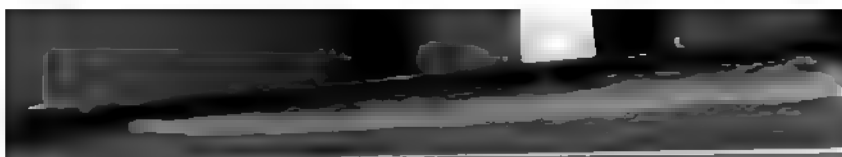
It was, however, shortly interrupted by the return of the baroness, in a queenly cloak of old-gold velvet trimmed with costly fur, and a rich little bonnet with a gleam of gold about it.

"Come, please," she said and went before them. The lackeys were on duty at the street door and hastened to open it as the baroness approached. Outside stood a victoria with two chestnut horses, and a servant in dark street-livery had his hand on the silver handle of the door.

"You ordered your horses?" Henneberg exclaimed.

"Your coupé would scarcely have been comfortable for three," she replied; and besides, I am used to my own carriage."

She entered, while Henneberg directed his coachman to follow the victoria. There was a courteous dispute between the two men as to which should take the front



seat, and the baroness put an end to it by decisively calling Koppel to sit at her left.

Noiselessly, on its rubber tires, the carriage rolled along the fine pavement of the boulevard Malesherbes, and thence, through the place de la Concorde, to the baron's club.

"Will you see if the baron is here," the lady said, "and if you do not find him, we will go on to the prefecture."

Henneberg and Koppel got out of the carriage and went into the building. They breathed more freely, when the servant in the hall assured them that the baron was in the house. He appeared almost immediately in the salon where they awaited him, a short, thin old man, nearly bald, his face yellow and incredibly wrinkled; on his upper lip, a fiercely black, dyed moustache; on his under lip, a no less inexorably youthful *mouche*; in his eye, a monocle; in his button-hole, a red ribbon. His appearance struck Koppel with a sudden feeling of distress. Like a flash came to him the contrast between this whited sepulchre and the splendid vitality of the woman outside, in her carriage with its silken linings of soft blue; and some consciousness of a concealed tragedy rushed upon him. But the image of his mother quickly banished these thoughts.

The baron affably held out two fingers to Henneberg, and inquired what he wanted. When informed, he turned very kindly to Koppel and said: "I shall be delighted to be of service to you." Then he went to the telephone, and called up the prefecture of police. The response was prompt. After a few sentences had been interchanged he turned to Koppel, who had been waiting in a state of the keenest anxiety.

"Monsieur le préfet says to me that he is at this moment dressing to go out to an official dinner, and must go at once. He, however, places at my disposal his secretary who, in this matter, will be as useful as the prefect himself. The secretary begs you to come to him at once. That is the best which you can do, I think. He is expecting you."

Koppel thanked him with great emotion, but the baron interrupted him : " Oh, please ! It is a pleasure to me. And now, lose no time. I wish you success !"

Meantime he had called for his hat and overcoat, and accompanied his visitors to the carriage, where he gallantly kissed his wife's hand, and told her what the present situation was. Henneberg and Koppel were about to take their leave, but she remonstrated : " What are you thinking about ? I am going with you." And the three went away together, while the baron returned to his club.

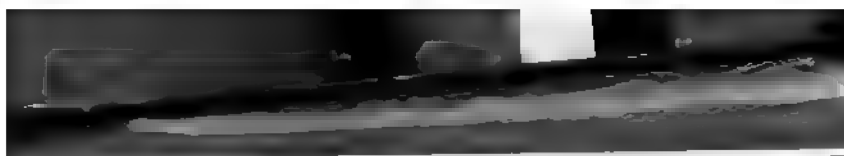
At the palace of the prefecture on the boulevard du Palais, they went upstairs to the room of the secretary, which was in the story above the prefect's apartment. The secretary rose to his feet in much surprise, as they entered, for he had not expected to see a lady of such evident distinction, and he manifested a quite extraordinary alacrity as she mentioned to him her own name and that of her two companions.

Koppel again recounted his sad story, for the tenth time in this wretched day. The secretary listened with the greatest attention until he had finished speaking, and then sat silent and reflective for a few moments. The baroness interrupted his meditations. " Since Frau Koppel seems not to have met with an accident, or to have been taken ill in the street, what can possibly have happened to her ? A crime in clear daylight, in the midst of a city is most unlikely ? Abductions are mostly matters of romance, are they not ?"

" Madame la baronne," the secretary replied, " the most improbable things happen in a great city like this. But it is useless to puzzle ourselves over conjectures. To act is better. I will order the police-commissaries of all the districts to send in to me at once the returns of the day. Thus we may get something useful."

" This very thing monsieur le chef des personels has already done, or promised to do, two hours ago," Koppel interposed.

The secretary cast a rapid, and not particularly



friendly, glance at him, was silent a few seconds, then said: "Excuse me, madame la baronne;" and went into an adjacent room, where he was heard to speak, with carefully lowered voice, through the telephone. When he returned there was an expression of annoyance in his face, which he seemed vainly to endeavor to conceal.

"I will now take charge of the matter personally," he said, without explaining the result of his questions through the telephone. "Be sure, madame la baronne, that we will neglect nothing which promises to help."

"The baron and myself will be most heartily grateful both to you and to monsieur le préfet," replied the baroness, and took leave as a queen might do. The secretary accompanied them to the stairs, and remained standing till they had reached the next floor.

"Permit me to take you home," the baroness said, when they came to the street. "Up to this moment evidently nothing has been done but I have an impression that the secretary will fulfill his promise."

Koppel grasped the strong, slender hand of the beautiful woman and raised it to his lips in a transport of gratitude.

When the victoria stopped before the house in the rue Saint-André-des-Arts, the baroness shook hands with Koppel. "I will not go up now. At a moment like this I should fear to be intrusive. Permit me, however, to send at a later hour this evening, to see if you have news. And remember me cordially to madame."

Henneberg also bade Koppel good-bye, and begged to hear as soon as news were received.

In his own apartment Koppel found the two young neighbours from below, who modestly slipped away as he came in. Frau Käthe threw her arms around his neck. "We have been anxious also about you," she said. "How could you have staid away so long?"

He released himself from her embrace, and, in as few words as possible, narrated what he had done. He was extremely fatigued and seemed very much discouraged. Frau Käthe perceived this, and did not

insist on a more detailed account. She took his arm and let him into the dining-room. "I cannot eat," he said, but she begged him tenderly: "Be good, Hugo. You are suffering for food. Besides, we don't know how much need you may yet have for your strength."

During supper, not a word was spoken. In Koppel's mind, one idea was prominent,—the agony of the coming night. That he could not go to bed was clear to him. But what was there that he could do? Sit at home, and endure tortures? Or, uselessly, wander about the streets? And the most horrible thing of all was that this might last long, perhaps always. He had come to this, that he would have regarded it as a relief to know even the worst, even that his mother was dead, if only he could have certainty of some kind. Unendurable to him, on the other hand, seemed the thought that perhaps this mystery would never be cleared up. What if she had disappeared without leaving any trace behind her? That he should never to his life's end recover from the blow, he felt with shuddering certainty. The thought of his mother would beset him as a vision of agony, destroying his mental balance. She would forever come before his mind in circumstances of horror,—mangled and bleeding, calling for help, the victim of robbers and murderers,—conscious yet speechless among strangers and persons regardless of her suffering, stretching her hands out to her son, moaning out his name unintelligibly, drifting down the muddy, ice-cold river, under the knives of medical students, thrown into a pauper's grave by drunken labourers.

Supper was ended; Martha had, as quietly as possible, cleared away the dishes; the four agonized human beings were still sitting around the family table; when, suddenly, there was a loud and authoritative ring at the bell. All four started up, and rushed to the door. Koppel was first, and opened it. Without, stood a policeman, and the giant concierge was visible behind him.

"Monsieur Koppel?" the policeman said.

"Yes," was the breathless answer.



"An official despatch," the man said and handed him a folded paper without an envelope.

Koppel did not wait to return into the apartment, but where he stood in the open door, he read it, by the gas-light on the staircase: "From the prefecture of police to the police-station, rue de Buci. Notify Monsieur Koppel, rue Saint-André-des Arts, No. 222, that Madame Koppel, his mother, is at the police-station, rue d'Auteuil, and is at his disposal."

He gave a cry of joy, and began to tremble so violently that the paper almost dropped from his hand. Frau Käthe snatched it and read it aloud. She and the children began sobbing, and the concierge crept quietly downstairs to carry the news to his own family and to the neighbourhood.

With shaking hand, Koppel drew a five-franc piece from his pocket, and offered it to the policeman, but the latter, with a gesture of decision, refused to accept the coin.

"I beg you to take it. You have brought relief to a family in despair."

"Say no more," the policeman replied, gruffly. "I am not allowed."

"At least, then, let me shake hands with you."

Upon this the policeman's stern look softened, and he gave a friendly grasp to the outstretched hand, then strode away.

Koppel and his family returned into the dining-room and clung together, parents and children alike crying.

Koppel was the first to rally. He called for his coat and hat, and while Oscar ran to fetch them, he said to Frau Käthe: "You must send for the doctor, to have him here when I bring her home. Have her bed warmed, and have hot water ready. He will tell us what else to do."

"But how in all the world did she get to Auteuil, which is a good hour's walk from here?" Frau Käthe exclaimed.

"We shall soon know all about that. Or, if we don't

know, it is no matter. The important thing is that we have her back."

He hastened down stairs and took the first fiacre that came past without a fare. He took the cab by the hour, and promised the man double pay and more than that, if he would drive as rapidly as his horse could possibly go. The cabman accepted the proposal and laid on the whip. It was not a smooth motion, as in Henneberg's coupé, or the victoria of the baroness Agostini, but the fiacre dashed through the streets, while the sparks flew from under the horse's hoofs, and the motion almost satisfied his eager impatience. Nevertheless, it was fully a half-hour before he reached the designated place, which was at the opposite extremity of Paris.

In front of the building stood two policemen, who, as they saw Koppel spring out of the vehicle before even it had stopped, called out:

"Ah, it is for the old lady!" and they went in ahead of him.

The first object that Koppel perceived, as he entered the over-heated room, was his mother, who sat on a wooden bench in the middle of the room, and was looking around her with the mien of a scared and anxious child. As soon as she perceived him, her face brightened, and she called out, smiling: "Well! here you are!"

He took her in his arms and kissed her, at first quite unable to speak. How she felt to his touch! And how she looked! Her outside garments were wringing wet. Her gown was wet, also: she was bespattered almost to the eyes with the thick, ropy mud of the Paris streets, her hands were clammy through the knitted mittens, and she looked almost too tired to hold herself up. Near her, on the floor, stood her basket, into which had been forced a monstrous cabbage, almost too large to remain in it.

The presence of three policemen and a sergeant, who all looked on with curiosity, enabled Koppel to master his first emotion. In obedience to the ser-

geant's order, he went to the desk and signed the inevitable document.

"How long has my mother been here?" he said.

"For about two hours. It was about six o'clock when our men noticed her in the street. She was stumbling and slipping along slowly with her basket. At first they thought something else was the matter—no offence meant!—and brought her in. Then we soon saw that it was nothing of the kind, and that the old lady had lost her way. She talked a great deal, but none of us could understand what she was saying. We offered her some warm soup, but she would not take any."

"Two hours in these dripping clothes?" Koppel could not help saying.

"Yes! What could we do? we were obliged to keep her here."

"What should you have done with her to-night?"

"We should have sent her to the prefecture, or else to some hospital. But about an hour ago came inquiries from the prefecture about an old lady, so and so, who could speak no French. When I said: This is our guest! and I sent back the message: We have her. As you see, I was right." And the sergeant rubbed his hands contentedly, as he spoke.

Koppel was eager to get his mother home. He suppressed his desire to have further particulars, and said only: "May I show my gratitude to your men for their kindness to my poor mother?"

"They have only done their duty," was the firm reply. But the sergeant added, in a more friendly tone: "We ourselves are not allowed to accept anything, but if you really would like, you can ask our superintendent to give us permission to receive your gift."

Koppel thanked him, then gave his arm to his mother to assist her to the cab. "My basket?" she cried anxiously. A policeman guessed her meaning: picked the basket up laughing, and handed it to her. The cabman seemed in the meantime, to have obtained information as to what was going on, for he laughed

out, as the two emerged from the doorway, and exclaimed: "Now this is good! this is good!"

"Yes; now home as quickly as possible, as quickly as you can, please," Koppel replied, while he lifted the old lady—now quite unable to raise her feet from the ground—into the cab. He pulled off his own overcoat, and wrapped it around his mother, who was beginning to shiver with the cold and dampness. And he rubbed her hands, warming them in his own.

"What tiresome men!" began the old lady quite peacefully. "They were scribbling all the time, and stupid as oxen, too!"

"How ever did you wander so far away from home?"

"I don't know, myself." She spoke in a low voice, and seemed ashamed. "But it can happen to anybody in a foreign city."

"Did you not inquire your way from any one?"

"Certainly. But people don't understand what you say to them. One man looked at me and laughed and shook his shoulders—you know how they do here. Then I spoke to a woman and she didn't even stop. After that I didn't try any more."

"Have you had anything to eat all day?"

"Why not?"

"Where?"

She looked at him with surprise.

"Where?" she said. "Why at home, of course, as I do every day. Are you joking?"

Koppel perceived that it was useless to question her further and he remained silent. His mother fell asleep, leaning against his shoulder.

When they reached the house, the cabman, whose expectations were fully satisfied by the *pourboire* that he received, assisted in carrying the old lady as far as the stairs. A dozen of the inmates of the house and some of the neighbours from outside were standing in the hall, and they welcomed Koppel with cordial congratulations. Knecht, the concierge, by force of arms, took his mother away from him, and himself carried her up-stairs. The doctor had arrived,

and directed that the old lady should be at once put to bed. Koppel gave her over to his wife, listened for a moment to the childrens' eager delight and questions, then bade them wait until he had sent certain messages by telephone.

It was now nearly nine o'clock, and at nine the office would be closed. But he arrived in season to get off three despatches—one to the secretary of the prefecture; another to the Baroness Agostini; and a third to Henneberg; and he only breathed freely when this duty was performed.

His day's work was ended. For the first time in ten hours he was tranquil, notwithstanding the new anxiety about his mother's health which had sprung up.

Returning home, he found the doctor just going away. "It is evidently a case of sudden loss of memory," the latter said, "as often happens with old people. The attack, however, is entirely over."

"And the results of the fatigue and exposure?"

"About that we cannot yet say. But we must hope for the best."

In his mother's room, Frau Käthe sat by the bedside and held the old lady's hand in hers. Frau Koppel had been washed clean, her hair had been brushed smooth, she had taken a quantity of warm milk—of which a further supply stood ready, if she should wake—and she now lay breathing quietly, and peacefully asleep. Koppel stroked his wife's hair and cheek, and with brimming eyes she leaned her head against his breast.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE EIFFEL TOWER.

"It is really incredible," the doctor said, the next morning, after carefully observing Frau Koppel: "there is not the slightest fever, no difficulty in breathing, not so much as a cold in the head. Such power of resistance in a person of her age I have never seen in my life. You have every reason to hope that your mother will be spared to you many years yet. But she must not again go out alone."

Koppel and Frau Käthe shook hands with the doctor in great delight, and he went away, saying that there would be no occasion for him to make another visit.

Indeed, the old lady was in high feather, and it was a difficult task to keep her in bed the one day which the doctor advised. Only her right arm was somewhat lamed from the weight of the basket with its enormous cabbage which she had carried about for so many hours. It was evidently very painful to her, however, to be questioned about her adventure; and her family, therefore, avoided reference to it. Only to Elsa, who was her favourite, she related in fragments during the day, all sorts of reminiscences that awakened in her mind: how, in her wanderings, at first she was merely surprised, and then became alarmed; how she seemed to find many places familiar, especially when she came near the river, which happened several times; how then, all the street sights seemed to swim before her eyes, and she went along as if in a dream, without thought, or idea of time or space, almost without anxiety, or only with an uncomfortable feeling that they might be anxious about her at home because she was so long away: and Elsa listened, smiling, but sometimes, also, tearful.



From the other inmates of the house, and from neighbours outside came many inquiries about the finding of the old lady. The great publisher, who lived in the private house between the courtyard and the garden, sent a servant to ask if she were doing well. The famous counsellor who occupied the *bel étage* on the street, did the same. It was the first time in eleven years that Koppel had been in communication with these rich neighbours of his. From Baroness Agostini came congratulations and a great splendour of hot-house flowers. Henneberg came himself, but stayed only a few minutes, feeling that the whole family needed rest.

On Monday morning early, appeared an unknown individual who desired to speak with Koppel. When the latter came into the parlour, the visitor said: "I am a police Inspector. The chief of the personal section sends me to you to express to you his regret that, in spite of every effort, no trace of your mother has been found. Also, he desired me to inquire if you have obtained any news of her."

Koppel listened, astonished and amused.

"I am deeply obliged to monsieur le chef for his attention. My mother has been at home since night before last. She was found through the agency of the police.

"What!" exclaimed the Inspector, astounded. "You have found her, and through the agency of the police?"

Koppel brought the telegram, that blessed bit of paper which, thirty-six hours earlier, had changed his distress into joy, and handed it to the Inspector. The latter read it attentively, and shaking his head, he murmured:

"Extraordinary! most extraordinary!"

"I also, the same evening, sent by telephone to the secretary of the prefecture my sincerest thanks," Koppel added.

"The secretary did not communicate this to us, and we have been occupied with the search." He seemed much discomposed and expressed himself with a cer-

tain awkwardness. After a moment he rose and took leave, saying, with an assumption of good feeling: "All's well that ends well! The principal thing was that you should find her."

This visit reminded Koppel that he had promised to notify the overseer at the Morgue if his mother was found. As he wrote the note, he experienced something like a repetition of the anguish that had overwhelmed him on entering the dead-house. With new force he felt his indebtedness to Henneberg and the Baroness Agostini! Without their interposition he would, perhaps, still be suffering the torture of uncertainty. The coming of the police Inspector made this almost positive. And how improbable it was that the old lady, in spite of her toughness, could have come out safe, if she—in dripping clothes and unfed—had been obliged to remain for hours longer at the station.

That same Monday, early in the afternoon, the Baroness Agostini drove to the house in the rue Saint-André-des-Arts. She had an uncommon memory for places. Although it was nearly ten years since she had called upon the Koppels, and then only two or three times, she remembered the house perfectly, and even the apartment, without inquiring of the concierge, who looked with surprise and respect at the very tall and elegant woman in her sealskin coat who passed rapidly by his door; and he followed her to the foot of the stairs, to see whither she was going. He had the idea she might be on her way to the Masmajours, the milliners on the first floor of the interior, and he wondered much that the two young girls in the short time they had been in Paris, should have obtained such distinguished *clientèle*. But when he saw the unknown lady go past the Masmajours' door, and ascend the next flight of stairs, he went slowly and majestically back into his loge.

Frau Käthe would never have recognized the baroness, if Koppel had not very enthusiastically described her, and the wife now looked at her visitor with extreme curiosity, not without a certain embarrassment. The remembrance of the poor young teacher of ten



years earlier interfered with the present personality, and it was not without great difficulty that the two could be blended. It was indeed the tall figure of Fräulein Hausblum, but it seemed broader than of old, perhaps the effect of the changed fashion in dress; formerly there had been clinging garments, now the puffed sleeves stood out wide; but the sovereignty in the eyes, which even a woman could not help feeling, the decision of the mouth were unknown to the face of Fräulein Hausblum. Or could it be only that Frau Koppel had never noticed them?

The baroness held out both hands as the other entered the room, greeted her with winning friendliness, and congratulated her warmly on the happy ending of the affair.

"How thankful to you we must be!" Frau Käthe said. "I cannot bear to think what would have happened if we had not found you."

"I am most happy," the baroness said, "to have been able to give any assistance;" and she accepted the offered seat upon the sofa.

Frau Käthe felt as uncomfortable as if she had had something upon her conscience. It appeared to her as if they had not been kind enough, ten years before, to the poor, solitary young teacher alone in the great city; as if they had not made effort enough to find for her the desired employment, as if it had been very heartless in them never to make any search for her, when she did not reappear at their house.

As though she could read what was now passing in Frau Käthe's soul, the baroness said, with a smile: "How chance separates human beings, or throws them together! It is as wonderful as the wildest romance. Fortunately, we meet again in circumstances which I hope will render pardonable my long neglect in the matter of our acquaintance."

"It is very good of you to put it in that way," Frau Käthe said, earnestly. "On the contrary, it was a great fault of ours that we took no more trouble about you. But we had no acquaintances and no influence, and there was nothing we could do——"

Had it not been that her embarrassment almost took away her good sense, Frau Käthe would never have been guilty of the fault of reminding a brilliantly successful person of her less imposing beginning.

The baroness seemed either not to notice this want of tact, or to think it of no consequence. "Well, all that is past!" she said, with a simplicity so admirably assumed that not the slightest self-importance showed through it. "In good fortune and in ill, I have always remembered gratefully you and your kind reception of me."

"What! Have you ever had ill fortune?"

"Yes, very ill."

"But I hope not for any length of time? And fate has made amends to you now for any former ill-treatment, surely."

"I have been obliged to assist my fate a good deal," the baroness said; "I have very little reason to trust to destiny unaided. But no matter about that. Could I, perhaps, see madame, your mother-in-law, if she is not too tired?"

"Certainly," rejoined Frau Käthe, and hastened to call Frau Koppel.

The old lady, conscious of her loss of memory, was accustomed to practice—in the hope of concealing this misfortune—the innocent device of meeting every person who was presented to her with a joyous recognition and warm greeting. It must be confessed that the frequently inappropriate degree of warmth often had an effect of reducing the advantage of this childishly sly endeavour.

The tall and richly-dressed woman who rose as she entered the room caused Frau Koppel at first a little embarrassment, but as the visitor held out both hands and most kindly smiled at her, she soon recovered her equanimity and cordially returned the greeting.

"Baroness Agostini," Frau Käthe said.

"Excuse me, Käthe, I know! Of course I know the lady," Frau Koppel exclaimed, briskly. "How have you been? That you are well and lively now, I can see plainly."

The baroness smiled and tenderly patted the old hand. She well understood the innocent stratagem, and also its motive. "Yes, thank you; I am very well," she replied, "and I wanted to come and see with my own eyes that you were well, too."

Frau Koppel glanced up quickly. She was not quite sure whether to take this as a reference to her recent adventure, or whether it was simply a general expression of kind feeling. But the baroness went on talking in a cheerful, pleasant way; not a word followed relating to the adventure, and the old lady became quite at her ease and chatted away about the weather and about housekeeping, endeavouring every now and then to draw the visitor out as to herself, in the hope of being thus enabled to identify her, until at last Frau Käthe gently suggested that it was time for the afternoon nap.

"Your husband is a man of great feeling," the baroness said to Frau Käthe, when Frau Koppel was gone, "how devoted he is to his mother! When I remember in what a condition I saw him while he was searching for her——"

"Yes," Frau Käthe replied, "she is so much to him that I could almost be jealous. If he had lost her—no, I cannot bear to think of it! But my husband owes it to her."

"Does not every child owe it to a mother?"

"Certainly. And still, his case is different. My mother-in-law had four children. The oldest son fell in the war of '66. The daughter died when her first baby was born. My husband and his younger brother had diphtheria while they were boys in school. The brother died, but the mother's care succeeded in saving Hugo. She took the disease herself, and for months remained an invalid. A son can never forget such devotion if his heart is in the right place."

The baroness nodded silently.

"Besides, my mother-in-law was a widow with three half-grown children, without means except a small pension—her husband was also a teacher—and she kept the boys in school till they had entirely

finished their studies, and she married the daughter to a very respectable man. That was a success!" Frau Käthe sighed deeply, perhaps unconsciously. "Hugo is the only one of the children now living, and he has to be grateful to her not only for himself, but for those who are gone."

"It is a great happiness that he can do so much and that he has been able to do it so long," the baroness said, almost as if speaking to herself. There was a moment's pause, and then she asked: "Are you contented in Paris, Frau Doctor?"

"We are very much strangers here."

"That, one must always be, in a great city."

"But not people who were born here."

"It is almost the same thing. It is a mistake to think otherwise. Where millions of human beings are crowded together and thrown in each other's way, every man naturally is the enemy of every other man. There is an incessant pushing and supplanting. Either a man exploits others, or is himself exploited."

"But there are also good people, who are kind to others. We had, happily, the experience of this ourselves day before yesterday."

"That is true. There is goodness in a great city as there is on a battle-field in the midst of carnage, a Samaritan impulse towards the wounded and dying, the Red Cross following the army's advance."

"You distress me, Frau Baroness."

"That is not my intention, Frau Doctor. On the contrary, I meant only to show you that it was not your situation peculiarly, to be a stranger here. It is the fate of us all. A person living altogether within the warm nest of home, with parents and children ——"

"Pardon me, Frau Baroness, have you children?"

"I have not," answered the baroness, speaking briefly and coldly.

"It is just one's children for whose sake one is anxious. And suppose all goes well with them—mein Gott! one asks no very great thing from life—

still the children grow up ; and what is to become of them ? On their account I regret that we are so much strangers here. How can we marry our daughter if we have no society ? Unless we try the no longer unusual method of the matrimonial advertisement !"

The baroness remained silent.

"And what prospect is there for the boy," Frau Käthe went on, "who has no solid ground of Fatherland under his feet, but is as if suspended in the air ? He grows up to be a foreigner in Germany, a visitor in France."

"Fortunately these are anxieties for the future merely. Your children are yet very young."

"Yes. But later it will be too late for us to make any change in the situation."

"Have you plans, then, Frau Doctor ?"

"Not plans. Only wishes." And she sighed again.

Again there was a brief pause, and then the baroness broke the silence, asking if she could see Frau Käthe's daughter, whom she remembered as a fair-haired child.

Elsa was busy drawing in her own little room. Since her twelfth year she had drawn in pencil, and, more recently had begun the use of chalks and water-colours, always encouraged by the friendly praise of her teachers. Any professional use of her talent had hitherto been debarred her by the uncompromising scrupulousness of her parents, as well as by her own self-depreciation, but she worked diligently for her own improvement.

Being summoned into the parlour by the maid, she came at once, with the linen sleeves still drawn over her house-dress, and blushed deeply when she saw the Baroness Agostini. The latter was surprised at the beauty of the girl, who, moreover, appeared quite too old a person to be kissed and caressed ; this was unexpected, and the visitor, therefore, did no more than shake hands with her, and ask if she remembered seeing her many years ago. The baroness, also, asked some questions about Elsa's studies, and, as the girl replied, with her French accent and, now and then, a

French idiom put into German words, the Baroness Agostini said smilingly to Frau Käthe :

"You have a real little German-speaking Parisian here!" And as her admiring, half-envious glances dwelt on the creamy cheek, the lovely mouth, and the shining eyes of the seventeen years old Elsa, who was a real rosebud to look at, she added: "About this young lady you need have no anxiety, Frau Doctor, if men have eyes to see."

"A light under a bushel is no light at all," the mother answered. "But we must not say that in her presence; the little girl is quite conceited enough already."

"Mother, how can you?" Elsa cried, laughing and pouting, and the two exchanged a loving kiss.

The baroness rose. "Give my regards to Herr Doctor Koppel," she said. "I trust that you will never again have such anxious hours to go through with as you have just had!"

"They have had their advantage," answered Frau Käthe, "since they have brought us together, Frau Baroness."

"This has been my good fortune only. If you knew what I felt as I entered your dwelling! I have grown ten years younger since I have been here; and a great deal better," she added, with a sad smile.

With a cordial good-bye she parted from Frau Käthe and Elsa, who had accompanied her to the door and now looked after her until her tall figure disappeared at an angle of the stairway.

Frau Käthe was extremely surprised that the baroness had not invited her to return the visit. Was this mere carelessness or was it intention? She talked with her husband about it later, and agreed in his opinion that they had no occasion to force themselves into the society of people of wealth and distinction; he should pay his visit of thanks alone, and then it would appear whether or no the baroness desired to continue their acquaintance. But the visitor's uncommon personality had made a strong impression on Frau Käthe, and she could not easily forget her. When Henneberg came



again, she overflowed with questions about the Baroness Agostini. What had been her life in the ten years since they had met? How had she happened to marry the baron? How long ago was the marriage? Where and how had Henneberg made her acquaintance? Did he often see her? Had she really a well-assured position in high Parisian society?

Henneberg seemed to be rather ill at ease, under this questioning. He answered briefly, and sometimes evasively. He had first met the baroness some four years ago, about the time when she married the baron. With Agostini, he had made acquaintance through business transactions. About her previous life, he himself was not well informed. That she had been a teacher, Frau Koppel herself already knew. About her past and about her own family, she was not communicative. From facts which she had, from time to time, incidentally mentioned, he had been able to put together a fairly complete outline. She was the daughter of an army-surgeon, who had been severely wounded in the war of 1870, and, after several years of invalidism, had died. She had been her father's constant companion and nurse, scarcely ever absent from his side. Dr. Hausblum had married twice. After her father's death, the baroness had remained for a time with her stepmother and the children of the second marriage; but as there was very little sympathy between her and the widow, she had left the house, which could no longer be to her a home, and had undertaken by herself the struggle for existence, in which, apparently, she had not always been successful. She now, in spite of her great wealth, lived a somewhat secluded life—her husband being no longer young, and she herself preferring quiet intercourse with people of high intelligence to the giddy tumult of society. At the same time the position of the baron brought with it the necessity for exercising a certain amount of hospitality, and her receptions had the peculiarity that, besides rich and socially eminent people, one would often meet at her house the most famous artists and literary men of the time.

Frau Kathe greatly desired to know more. Especially she would have liked to hear how Fräulein Hausblum came to make the acquaintance of Baron Agostini. She, however, feared to question Henneberg further, especially as she perceived that the whole subject was one on which he spoke reluctantly.

During the week that followed Frau Koppel's adventure, the last night-festival on the exposition grounds occurred. Koppel invited the family of the floor below to have supper with them and later to drive to the Champ de Mars with them, after Frau Koppel, at her usual hour, had gone to bed. Frau Käthe felt much gratitude towards these neighbours for, on the memorable Saturday, the mother and daughters had manifested great sympathy with her and the children, and had passed several hours with them during Koppel's absence.

The Masmajours were natives of Nîmes. Monsieur Masmajour had been the agent of an Insurance Company of which an uncle of Madame Masmajour was president. The position involved little work and brought in but a small income, but it was valuable to Masmajour rather as an occupation than for its profits, he being well off himself, and having married a girl with money, so that their joint means were nearly sufficient for the family's support.

By the advice of a cousin, who was the manager of the Nîmes branch of a great Paris bank, Masmajour, early in the eighties, converted into Panama bonds both his own property and his wife's dowry, which had been in French bonds, railway stocks and mortgages, all paying but low rates of interest. His income was thus nearly doubled, and the family were enabled to adopt an extremely comfortable style of living. They began keeping two servants; they had a very handsome residence in town and a little place in the country; they formed the habit of making holiday trips to Paris and Italy; the girls had a governess, and the best private lessons in music and drawing that the town could furnish. This condition of prosperity lasted seven or



eight years; then came the Panama disaster. The Masmajours were ruined. The blow fell so heavily on the father, that for weeks he was in danger of losing his reason. At first he was resolved to shoot the cousin who had advised the Panama investment. His wife was but just in time to get the revolver away from him as he was rushing out of the house, and to persuade him, with the greatest gentleness, to remain quiet, at least for a day. Then his rage turned against himself; and the poor wife was now only just able to keep him from hanging himself with a curtain-rope, in their own bed-room. From that time on, she never left him alone for an instant. And at the same time the brave woman made her plan for the future of the family. She perceived at once that they must leave Nîmes. Her husband had no longer the head for his insurance agency, and even if he could have become sufficiently composed to carry on this work, the income of the place, from two to three thousand francs, would be quite insufficient for the family's support. She was unwilling that her rich relatives and her wide circle of acquaintances in Nîmes should be the witnesses of their distress, and her pride could not endure to seek for employment in a city where she had always filled an envied place.

She decided to go to Paris. In the great city they would be unknown and unobserved. There they could live as frugally as their situation required, and could labour, without humiliation, for their daily bread. She had unusual taste and deftness of hand,—qualities of a refined race, inherited also by her daughters,—and in all their prosperity she had delighted to make her own bonnets,—“poems,” Masmajour was wont to call them;—and she had been much admired by all Nîmes for this skill, even by indignant milliners, who nevertheless as eagerly copied her “creations,” as they did those that came direct from Paris. This talent she now designed to make useful. Accordingly in the spring of the exposition year she removed to the capital, took a very modest apartment in the rue Saint-André-des-Arts, set up house-keeping with the remains of the

Nîmes plenishing, and with quiet, invincible courage, began the battle for existence.

It was harder than she had thought it would be. Her first idea was to place her two daughters, Adèle, seventeen, and Blanche, sixteen years old, in some fashionable house; but she found there was no opportunity for this. To obtain a place in a first-class establishment was about as difficult as it would be to be made ambassador; urgent recommendations were necessary from public men, senators,—if possible, ministers,—or else from “friends” of the fore-woman, who, as a rule decides on applications. This path Madame Masmajour could not, and would not, tread.

Milliners on a smaller scale required sureties, and preferred to have trained the girls themselves, or, at best, would accept them as paying assistants. There was nothing left to do but to take in work at home. With great difficulty and much solicitation, work was obtained from a great Bazar. The material furnished was trash, and the pay was inconceivably small. Their miserable earnings did not so much distress the mother and daughters, as did the worthless quality of the materials and designs, on which they were obliged to waste their skill. That was a sad time, but fortunately it lasted only a few weeks. Then Madame Masmajour chanced to meet, one day, when she was carrying back some completed work to the Bazar, an agent who had South-American custom. He ventured at first a small order; the result was satisfactory, and from that time on he supplied them with work, not all that they could have wished, it is true, but still coming in regularly. Still, it was not what Madame had hoped; the agent kept down the price, with the coolness of a rich employer, dealing with poor and unresisting employées; and the taste of the South-American ladies inclined to rich fringes, and parti-colored enamel buckles and pins, and brilliant hues in ribbons, flowers and feathers, rather than to finely grouped shadings, very delicate ornaments, and graceful originalities in outline, in the use of varied material and in the placing of a bow, a clasp, a flower; but now the silk was heavy, the velvet

fine, everything was of the most expensive kind, nor was there required a strict copying of a model, but many pleasing varied effects could be introduced at will. With her optimistic nature, Madame Masmajour soon became reconciled to these beginnings, and it was her hope in time to be able to establish a business of her own, and be free to work entirely in accordance with her own taste.

Her husband was to her, in these early days of endeavour and disappointment, of no assistance whatever. At first, he remained plunged in the deepest depression, and seemed to be stupified by the violent and extreme change in all his surroundings. In the relinquishment of the house in Nîmes, in the removal to Paris, and the establishment of the family there, he was like one more piece of furniture that must go too, with the disadvantage of being more inconvenient to carry than the rest were, because it moved and got in the way of the people who were busy. In the fatiguing days of looking for an apartment and for work, Madame Masmajour, not to be hindered by her husband, often took him to the Louvre and left him there, either alone or accompanied by Blanche, seated before some beautiful picture, with the injunction to remain until she should come to fetch him to dinner; and after dinner she would plant him in the same way again, to remain till five o'clock.

Later, when the new house-keeping fell into its regular routine, and mother and daughters began to work silently and methodically, and all the little acts of daily life were punctually done, and everything was in its place, then Masmajour awakened, as if from a bad dream, and recovered all the indestructible self-confidence of a son of the South.

He said not a word about it, but he recognized perfectly the fact that, at the present moment, he was to his family a burden, and nothing else. He had brought them to ruin, and now they had the additional task of finding him food. They were very far from making this appear; on the contrary, Madame Masmajour would often say at table how grateful she felt

to him that he had been so heroically willing to abandon his beloved Nîmes and begin a new life in Paris; how hard it would have been for her if she had been alone in a strange city to contend with circumstances; how much easier and smoother everything went when there was a man at the head of the family; but all these consoling remarks, so kindly meant, failed to delude his conscience. Manly ambition seized upon his soul. He would show his own family and all the world, of what he was capable. Since he had—not through his own fault, oh, no! but through the wickedness of others—lost one fortune, he would gain another, a greater one!

His first thought, when he began to get his head again, was to find a position under government. Why not? Was he not an educated and capable man, experienced in keeping accounts and in the conduct of affairs? Was he not a victim to his patriotic feeling? Had he not sacrificed his property in the support of a gallant French enterprise, set on foot to carry the fame of France to remote shores? Did not the country, indeed, owe him gratitude and indemnification?

He began by going to see the senators and deputies from his department. He was well received at first, for he had been an influential man in Nîmes, and for many years a member of the electoral committee of the predominating party there. When he stated his errand, the statesmen from his department took a different tone. They promised, as if by common consent and with curiously similar, vague phraseology, that they would talk with everybody, and would let him know when there was anything of interest to report to him; they gave him to understand that they would zealously exert themselves in his behalf, but that they were extraordinarily busy, and would be obliged to him if he would abridge his visit, and would not come again. Very soon they were denied to him altogether. They were not at home if he called, they made no answer if he wrote, would not come if, in the Palais Bourbon or in the Luxembourg, he sent by the door-

to him a thousandfold. And Masmajour said: "That's true; from nothing, nothing comes; sometimes we must cast our bread upon the waters;" and he accepted, with a pacified conscience, the two little pieces of silver, without noticing how hard the toil sometimes was by which his wife earned it. When he came home to his dinner, there was always some favourite dish for him, a well-seasoned *bouillabaisse* or a steaming *cassoulet*, a *brandade* or *ayolci*, a stuffed *aubergine*. For Madame Masmajour had all the southern cuisine at her fingers' ends. She had the good will and the patience that their elaborate preparation demands, the correct taste, the activity, and that atom of fancy, without which no cook can be an artist. Madame Masmajour understood everything and took care about everything. She planned the work for the two girls, advised them as to designs and colours in the trimming of the bonnets; she ran to the Halles to buy provisions, and she made ready the meal; she carried the completed bonnets to the agent, and brought home fresh materials; in the afternoon, she sat for an hour at the work-table designing some new model; she washed and scoured in kitchen and bedrooms, for the girls must not injure their skilful artist-fingers with rough work; and finally at eleven or later, she sought her bed, the last person up in the house.

It was three or four months before Masmajour clearly understood that the government would not provide him with employment. Then, however, he became a bitter enemy to the administration, and a passionate Boulangist. The *Petit Journal* was no longer peppery enough for his taste. He read only the *Intransigeant*, and the *Petit Caporal*, clenching his fist as he read and grinding his teeth, till Madame Masmajour took alarm, and implored him to consider his health. He frequented public meetings of the Boulangist party, and delivered in his own house at table the bloodthirsty talk which he had not had the courage to utter publicly. He did not content himself merely with unfruitful complaints about false Republicans, who plundered the country and were the



destruction of true patriots; he thought out a luminous plan for the salvation of the people. The valiant Boulanger should be made president of the Republic, and be brought back in triumph to Paris; he should then, at once, declare war upon Germany, conquer her, and recover the indemnity of twelve milliards. With this money the Panama bonds and the unlucky certificates of interest should be at once brought to their face value; then the canal should be built; and thus the war would be made to produce a colossal work of civilization. He put this plan on paper, for the purpose of sending it to General Boulanger in his place of exile, and was so satisfied with his work that, to share this pleasure, he read the paper aloud to his family. Madame Masmajour looked perplexed, and offered the advice that it should not be sent, the post-office being rather untrustworthy, and there being a possibility of annoying results; but the excitable Blanche, in spite of her mother's significant look and gesture, spoke out boldly, crying impatiently: "But, papa, you are not serious; you don't know any more about politics than a whey-cheese!"

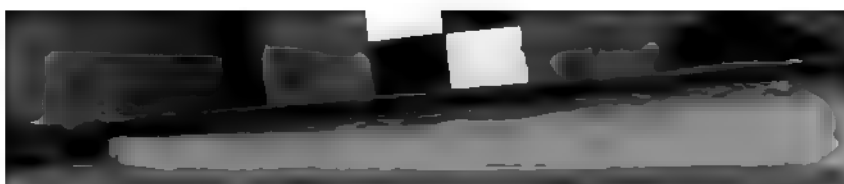
Masmajour was much displeased and withdrew silently into his bedroom. Blanche at once regretted her outbreak and ran after her father, begging him to forgive her. This was done after some grumbling; but the letter to Boulanger remained unsent.

The Masmajours were extremely reserved. Their pride prevented them in their present distressful circumstances, from making acquaintance with strangers who could not know that they had seen better days. However, between them and the Koppels friendly relations sprung up very early. The new neighbours were interesting to Frau Käthe and Elsa. Through Martha, who, in spite of her surly nature, was much given to gossiping with the family of the concierge, they learned the previous history of the new-comers; and they noticed, with the warmest sympathy, the slender little mother, with her refined features and pallid complexion, her brilliant black eyes and her rapid movements, who, though she looked so delicate, was

busy from morning till night, ran up and down stairs twenty times a day, had no servant at all to assist her in the housework, and always looked so neat in her black woolen gown, over which she wore a white apron when indoors.

Of the two girls, Adèle, the elder, closely resembled her mother. There were the same brilliant dark eyes, the same very thick-growing black hair, the high-bred face, with its straight nose, its small and rather thin-lipped mouth, and the well-rounded chin; there also was the same extremely dainty figure. Blanche, the younger, resembled her father in some degree, whose low forehead, very thick eyebrows, aquiline nose and heavy under-jaw, she—with wonderful beauty added—repeated. The shy look of Masmajour, the peevish droop of his thick lips, were apparently not original traits of his physiognomy but traces of the experiences of his life, for Blanche's brown eyes looked out straight and somewhat daringly, and her full, scarlet lips, though usually serious and firmly shut together, could often part with ringing laughter. She was small, like her father; and, in fact, the whole Masmajour family, in contrast with the tall Koppels, had something like the effect of Tanagra figurines. It was Koppel's idea that Madame Masmajour and Adèle had preserved the features of some old Greek ancestor, either one of the Greek colonists of ancient Marseilles or a soldier in a Roman legion, while in Masmajour and Blanche the still more ancient Phœnician ancestry showed itself. At first, the two families looked at each other in a friendly way and with a slight salutation as they passed on the stairs; but soon the greeting became more cordial, and when Frau Käthe sent Martha to inquire if Madame Masmajour would make their spring bonnets for herself and Elsa, the former came at once to call on the neighbour who desired to become a customer. The visit was returned on the same day, and an acquaintance sprung up, which, on the part of Elsa and the two sisters, soon became an intimacy.

Elsa had a few school acquaintances, but she had had very little young society, and she at once attached



herself to the quiet, gentle, dreamy Adèle, with all the fervour of a nature already half aware of its capacity for affection, but hitherto without opportunity to exercise it outside her own family. Adèle interested and enraptured her by all the individualities of her girl's nature. Her southern accent was as entertaining as a play. Her account of the brooding silence of the old city of Nîmes, of the lizard-like life of the inhabitants in the deserted streets, of the heavenly blue skies and the lavish splendour of the sunshine of Provence, filled Elsa with a dreamy delight and longing for romantic experience. The sudden change in the circumstances of the family shocked the young German girl, and the patience with which Adèle, who had been brought up as a young lady, supported her new life as a poor, dependent working-girl, inspired her with devout admiration.

On their part, the Masmajours were greatly pleased with Elsa. At first, for her youthful beauty, which charms women's hearts as well as men's, and the entire simplicity of her nature; and then, because she was a foreigner, a German. It is true Elsa spoke better French than any of the Masmajours, but for all that, she was not a French girl; and it pleased Madame Masmajour and her daughters that they, notwithstanding their narrow circumstances, could regard themselves as politically better off,—as friendly hosts, so to speak,—that they could consider their German neighbours as protégées, as guests, without legal rights, dependent upon their kindness, their chivalrous courtesy.

Elsa went often to visit her friends on the lower floor, sat with them for hours, read aloud to them, observed the dainty touches with which they handled their velvet and flowers, and sometimes herself sat silently drawing near their work-table, whereat the sisters admired her, in their turn. Now and then Elsa must say a word in German to them or recite a German ballad, upon which Madame Masmajour wondered greatly at the barbaric sound of the hitherto unheard foreign tongue, while the girls would listen silently

and when Elsa had finished, break out laughing, as if something tickled them in the back. On holidays and Sunday afternoons, Adèle and Blanche often came upstairs, and enjoyed using the piano, as they had none themselves, and were glad not to lose what skill they had already acquired. Frau Käthe made them very welcome, but she took no large share in the young folks' conversation, for her French was not available for any very long and rapid chit-chat. The old lady contented herself with patting the brown cheek of Adèle or Blanche, and allowing herself to be smiled at and hugged; while Oscar was useful and companionable, did the honours of the salon to the young visitors, and when they went away, escorted them to their own door. The parents permitted the four on summer evenings to walk together in the Luxembourg garden or along the quays, and Oscar felt himself very important as the masculine protector of the little flock.

Masmajour, himself, to tell the truth, saw the establishment and growth of this intimacy with very little delight. He did not wish that there should be anything more than the politeness which was due between neighbours and towards a customer. Undoubtedly the Koppels were Prussians; and against Prussians, he said, one should be always on one's guard. Nobody knew anything about these people, where they came from, what was their object in being in Paris. Experience had shown that foreigners were usually spics.

Further than this, he was scarcely ever permitted to go in his harangue, for at this point he was commonly interrupted—by Blanche with laughter, and by her mother and sister with the entreaty that he would drive such fables out of his head. After many vain attempts to bring his family to adopt his reserve towards their neighbours, he relinquished the attempt, but never could persuade himself to abandon his prejudice against them.

An important landmark in the relations between the two families was the first invitation to tea; it came from the Koppels. The invitation, and its acceptance,

were preceded by serious consultations in each household. The Koppels had to become satisfied that they were not throwing themselves at their neighbours' heads; the Masmajours had to determine a question of principle, whether they might properly accept invitations from strangers, since they, in their present situation, could not make the return which their feelings would dictate. The frank, ingenuous manner of Elsa, upon whom devolved the rôle of ambassadress smoothed away the difficulties. She explained that it was a very unceremonious affair, only a kind of object lesson in ethnology,—the Masmajours were to be instructed as to the German cuisine. Upon this, the Masmajours consented, having certain wonderful secrets of Provençal cookery to reveal in return.

On the day of the Koppel's great distress about the old lady, both families showed how near each other's hearts they had gradually come. The Masmajours were almost as much excited as the Koppels; all day long the sisters could neither work nor eat; they sat for hours with Frau Käthe and Elsa, not with any idea of bringing consolation—which their natural refinement of feeling prevented—but seeking only to keep the others' hearts warm by sympathy; and upon the happy termination of the adventure scarcely less tears of relief were shed by Adèle and Blanche, than by Elsa and Frau Käthe. And the Koppels now felt that they must, after the distress endured together, have a few merry hours in company with their neighbours.

This meal, to which they invited the Masmajours, went off finely. Its most brilliant feature was a goose, stuffed with apples and plums after the German fashion, a dish new to the French guests, but one towards which they at once became friendly. The beverage was Bayrisch beer, which the girls gallantly accepted,—at which Madame Masmajour sipped, not venturing on a long draught,—and to which Masmajour was the *only* one who preferred the usual red wine,—whether from taste or from principle no one knew. After supper the maid called two *fiacres*; in

one, the elder Masmajours with Elsa and Oscar took their seats, in the other, the Koppels with Adèle and Blanche; and so the party drove to the Champ de Mars. In paying for the fiacres, and in buying entrance tickets of howling boys at a very small price, a polite strife ensued between Koppel and Masmajour,—which the former finally brought to an end by reminding the latter that, on this occasion, he had the honour to be his host.

All day long it had rained and the weather was still threatening; that, however, did not prevent an enormous crowd from being present at this last evening-festival of the Exposition. Two hundred thousand persons had decided to amuse themselves that evening, let come what come might. They were not deterred by the tremendous crowd at the entrance-turnstile; they tramped unterrified through the sloughs and ponds of the soaked gravel-walks; they penned themselves up in the crowded restaurants and drinking-stalls; or they stood, unrelenting, in the mud, and gazed at the illumination of the Champ de Mars and the Trocadéro. Everywhere triumphed electric lights and gas-lights,—some unsheltered, others with coloured shades. Mostly they were arranged following the hackneyed architectural scheme,—along the outline of bridges and buildings, cruelly revealing the ungracefulness which the darkness of the night would kindly have concealed; but sometimes, on the front of great buildings, following a crude style of decoration, representing monstrous and grotesque combinations of coloured gems. The whole vast place, with its multitude of disconnected buildings, its rows of flag-staffs with their flags and pennants,—its extravagance of lights and swinging Chinese lanterns, its uproar of barbaric music, the brawling extortion in a thousand booths,—the push and shock of actual army-columns of untiring, gaping spectators,—seemed a startling materialization of the vagary of some insane peasant lad, who in his delirium represents to himself a frightfully overgrown village kermesse. The only beautiful thing in all this repulsive, confused scene, was the sky over-

head : a low-hanging, reddened cloud-roof, so entirely lustreless, that it did not seem to reflect the lights of this great Jahrmarkt, but rather to glow with an inward fire of its own.

The little group of the two families made its way with difficulty through the aimless, whirling, rather than streaming, crowd, towards the basins where the coloured jets were to play. The party were crowded and knocked about, so that the girls uttered many little outcries, and every minute one or another was in danger of being torn away and carried off by the rush. Koppel, as the tallest and strongest of the group, had the duty of serving as its breakwater. Wedging himself into the ever aggressive human mass, and cleaving it for the others to get through, there came over him a pity which was almost painful, for this crowd of human beings, and unconfessedly, a little pity for himself. Such is the pleasure of the populace! Each man struggles in the extremest discomfort, to the most profound exhaustion, to reach the best place for looking at a fountain, which then, he cannot enjoy, because others, crowding upon him, dispute every foot of ground. He returns home, after hours of uncomfortable wading in mud, dead-tired, bruised black and blue, with frightfully soiled, perhaps torn clothing, poorer in strength, poorer in money, and not even the richer by one pleasant recollection. What an enemy to the common man, the unprivileged man, is the great city!

Meantime, they had gotten as near to the basin as it was possible to come, since in front of them the crowd was already wedged firmly to the water's edge. If it were not possible to bring for them some of the iron chairs which were scattered through the park, the ladies could not hope to see anything. Koppel begged Masmajour to take charge of the party, and, with Oscar, hastened to one of the roofed passageways where there were a few chairs. Oscar snatched one and hastened back with it, not noticing the outcries which followed him from persons who were stroked, none too softly, by the chair-legs as he ran.

Koppel seized another, but almost at the same instant, a trifle later, another person, a man in a silk hat and fashionable overcoat, laid his hand upon it.

"Excuse me," Koppel said, grasping the chair.

"Certainly not!" rejoined the other roughly, trying to pull it away.

"I was the first," Koppel remarked, still peaceably, and held on.

"That's a lie," said the other sharply, and gave another pull.

The insult angered Koppel. "You impudent fellow!" he cried, and dragged at the chair so violently that the other nearly fell down. He recovered his balance quickly, and grasping the object in dispute with both hands, retorted: "Impudent yourself! And you won't get this chair."

The reddened faces and flashing eyes of the two men were very near each other, and Koppel in another instant, would have struck a blow, if some unconscious restraint had not kept back his fist. The quarrel had been in so loud tones that it had drawn quite a row of spectators. A young fellow, apparently of the higher working-class, with clever and decided face, who had happened to see the affair from its beginning, stepped forward from the generally evil-disposed row of lookers-in, and laid a hand on the shoulder of each of the disputants: "*Bourgeois*," he said, "it is not worth while to bite each others' noses off. Draw lots for the chair." A few of the spectators cried out half-joking, half-approving: "Good!" Koppel at once recovered his equanimity and nodded: "I am willing," he said. His opponent cast an angry look at the uncalled-for conciliatory, but offered no objection, noticing that the general opinion seemed to approve the proposed means of settling the dispute. The workman drew from his pocket a five-franc piece, then as quick as a flash returned it again,—a coin is easily flung into the air, but how easily, in falling, it might go astray!—and he took out instead a ten-centime piece. "Heads or tails?" he said to Koppel, who instantly answered: "Heads!" The coin went



up into the air, came down, and ten hands were stretched out for it. "Stop!" the workman cried, and the others obeyed. He was one of those born rulers, who, in any occurrence in a crowd, at once take the lead. He picked up the piece of money: "Heads!" he said; "the chair is yours."

"Thank you," Koppel replied, with a smile. His opponent still held on to the chair, but the workman said to him; "*Bourgeois*, let it alone!" upon which he released his hold, shrugged his shoulders, and walked away, muttering: "These Prussian vermin!" It was evident that he had remarked Koppel's German appearance.

Quite self-content, his hands in his pockets, the workman disappeared into the crowd, and Koppel, with the chair, sought to rejoin his party. It was exceedingly difficult to do this, for from all sides people were now rushing towards the place where he had lately been. As he made his way on, he heard questions and answers all about him: "What is the matter?" "Some one is pushing behind us." "A drunken man." "They have caught two Prussian spies." "They have caught a pickpocket." "A woman has fainted." Koppel found no lack of material for reflections on the psychology of a crowd, when suddenly a hand went under his arm, and a familiar voice said in French: "This is something I did not expect!" Koppel looked round, and perceived Henneberg, who strenuously endeavoured to pull him out of the crowd.

"You?" cried Koppel in German.

"Sh!" Henneberg said, and went on softly: "Where are you going?"

"I have my family and some neighbours, guests of ours, there by the basin, and I want to get over to them with this chair, so that they may see the lighted jets."

"You will not be very comfortable;" Henneberg said. "I'll go with you and say good-evening to the ladies. I was sitting just now in the beer-house and listening to the Gypsy Band, when I saw some disturb-

ance, I came out to investigate, and there you were in the midst of it."

Koppel told his story, as they made their way to where the party had been left. The situation there had changed for the worse, during his absence. The surrounding people would not allow their view to be impeded by the use of chairs, and insisted that the party with the chairs should fall back. To this Oscar would not agree, and exchanged sharp words with everybody, while Frau Käthe sought to quiet him, and Masmajour made small strategic movements with a view to separate his ladies a little from the Koppels.

Frau Käthe was delighted when Henneberg came up, with her husband. He shook hands with her, and said at once: "Please come out of this crowd."

"But we are waiting to see the coloured jets."

"And so you shall, Frau Doctor," he replied, still holding her hand, and begin to make his way out.

But Frau Käthe held back: "We have friends here with us," she said.

"They must come, too," he rejoined, and he drew her after him, as he moved.

There was nothing else for Koppel to do but to collect his children and the Masmajours, and, notwithstanding Masmajour's discontented murmurs and the surprise of the girls, to follow Henneberg.

Getting out of the crowd around the basin was much easier than forcing a way in. Very soon they were all in the open space at the foot of the Eiffel Tower, Henneberg the centre of the group. Masmajour, with an air of disapproval, held off; and at this moment it suddenly occurred to Koppel that he had committed a sin of omission. He hastened to present Henneberg in due form to his guests. Masmajour took off his hat ceremoniously. Madame Masmajour bowed, and Mademoiselle Adèle blushed. To her, the German gentleman was a well-known figure; she had noticed him when he visited the Koppels.

"The gentlemen would perhaps prefer to be by themselves, to use their own language," Masmajour

said; "I would not inconvenience them for anything in the world."

Henneberg and Koppel, speaking at once, both disclaimed any such wish; and Henneberg begged the honour of inviting the party to ascend the Eiffel Tower. Koppel endeavoured to make objections; Henneberg, however, did not listen to him, but conducted Frau Käthe and Madame Masmajour to one of the lifts; the others were obliged to follow whether they liked it or not, and a few moments later, they were all on the first platform of the Tower.

Henneberg hastened into the restaurant, which here offered its expensive hospitality to visitors of the Exposition. He was evidently quite at home in the place. The cashier, the head-waiter, all the attendants greeted him respectfully. The place was very full, but the head-waiter obsequiously conducted him at once to a reserved table at a window, overlooking the fountains and the so-called Midway Cupola. At this moment the coloured jets were beginning. The girls ran to the window and devoured the scene with their eyes. Blanche, especially, was so enraptured that she could not suppress small screams of delight, every time the liquid column with magical rapidity changed colour, whereupon Adèle gave her a little tap, and whispered: "But, Blanche, don't be childish."

Henneberg invited them to take seats, since at the table they could more comfortably enjoy the sight. While they gazed with rapture at the splendidly coloured water-jet springing up into the air, clear-cut and impetuous as molten metal, then spreading out, a sheaf of fire, then falling in a rain of sparkling rubies, emeralds, sapphires and amethysts, Henneberg whispered an order to the head-waiter.

"Permit me —" interposed Koppel.

"I permit nothing," said Henneberg, gaily; "You are my guest, or if that annoys you, my prisoner."

"Entirely apart from this question—it is only an hour since we finished supper."

"A drop of *sec* and a biscuit can be endured, even if it is only an hour since supper."

The waiter and the wine-drawer soon brought the order. Masmajour felt ill at ease, and threw glances at Koppel, in which were to be read inquiry, reproach, surprise, and protest.

"My friend Dr. Henneberg is somewhat tyrannical," Koppel said, turning to the Masmajours, "he has taken you away from me. We must submit."

Henneburg began talking with them about the Exposition and its great success and the fame which France had thus gained for herself in both hemispheres. He made all the specialties of the Exposition—the buildings, their tone of colouring, the machinery-halls, the streets of Cairo—the object of appreciative and evidently sincere compliments. Masmajour felt the delicate flattery, became enthusiastic also, and no longer refused the sparkling champagne.

Everybody at the table soon felt very contented. It was quite a change from the preceding situation. What had been detestable, wearisome, uncomfortable down there in the Exposition-park, was here changed into beauty and delight. The muddy paths among the grass-plots, which splashed back under the trampling feet, were now winding ribbons of bronze-brown, set into fine green lawns, and here and there presenting a dark-hued mirror to the lights. The crowd of human beings who, when one was amongst them, were an ill-smelling, pushing crowd, were now like processions of ants in active motion, creeping about, getting in each other's way, becoming disorderly, swinging round and forming rank again, and, under the observer's dreamy eye, traversing the animated scene from end to end. Suddenly flamed up a red blaze and cast over the whole place a dusky glow, in which the buildings seemed to smoulder, and the human figures assumed the aspect of the scriptural men in the burning fiery furnace. This was the conclusion of the show, the lighting up of the Eiffel Tower. Koppel's imagination took a wide flight. It seemed to him that he sat upon a throne, while at his feet, blazed dazzling parti-coloured Bengal lights, and, amid the lights and the flags, to the sound of softened and blended music from

near and far, two hundred thousand persons were executing complicated movements for the gratification of his eye. A popular festival, in which the whole populace of one of the great cities of the world takes part, is indeed something peculiar; the impression which the huge mass, in its rest and in its motion, produces, is overpowering in grandeur, if—yes, *if* one is not a supernumerary on the stage, but a spectator in his box. So from this evening, also, came forth the moral: it is essential to belong to the privileged minority.

It grew late, and it began raining outside, so that the windows were veiled with moisture and the parti-coloured scene beneath was as if washed out or, at least, seemed so to sleepy eyes; the restaurant was nearly empty. Frau Käthe exchanged a whispered word with Madame Masmajour, and said:

"Hugo, it is time to go home." Henneberg beckoned to the waiter and asked for his bill. It lay ready on the cashier's desk, and was at once brought to him on a plate, whereon he laid in return, as secretly as possible, a hundred-franc bill. Three bottles of champagne stood empty and a fourth had been uncorked. The waiter brought back only a few small coins, and Henneberg nodded to him to keep them. Masmajour could not help whispering to his wife, as the party broke up:

"It is not cheap in this place," to which she, in the same low tone, replied:

"Yes, dear; but there are some people who earn their money easier than others."

At the great gate, the Porte Rapp, the crush was really dangerous. At the point where the horse-cars and omnibuses were waiting, on the avenue Rapp, there were struggles of the raging multitude comparable only to the storming of the Malakoff tower. Wagons and fiacres were captured *en route* as they came up, and occupied by agile runners and climbers. No one not past master in all the arts of the arena, and moreover an accomplished pugilist, had the remotest chance of obtaining a vehicle.

"We shall have to walk," Koppel said, casting a

troubled glance at the tumultuous mass of carriages and men, which reached as far back as the steps of the Tower.

"It will do us no harm ; we are well rested," Frau Käthe replied.

"Permit me to find carriages for you," Henneberg interposed.

"Are you a magician ?" Koppel asked.

"There's no occasion for that ; you shall see."

He cast a searching glance over the crowd in front of the gate, and beckoned to a half-grown lad, who slipped like a lizard between the horses and through the thickest crowd of human beings, and hastened toward him. Almost immediately the gamin had reached the party. Henneberg said a few words with emphasis ; the boy replied, "I understand, Prince !" and shot away like an arrow.

"We will wait here quietly a few minutes. If the fellow cannot find a fiacre, three of the ladies, or perhaps four, can take my coupé, which is here in the avenue de la Bourdonnaye, and the rest of us can walk on until we meet one."

But this was not necessary. The gamin did not have the trouble of searching far. Noticing an approaching vehicle, on whose steps stood one of his comrades, he thrust this boy off without ceremony, took his place, and, coming up to the Tower entrance, invited, with a triumphant wave of the hand, his employer, who stood a little aside, to take possession of the fiacre. He, himself, meanwhile, did not leave the carriage-step or let go the door, but guarded it valiantly against numerous outstretched hands. The dispossessed lad, whom he had re-assured with a few whispered words, quietly stood by.

Henneberg came carelessly forward, and as the boy threw open the door, handed him a five-franc piece.

"Pardon me, Prince," the gamin said fearlessly ; "I have promised two francs to my friend here ; he had to go to the Champs Elysées for it."

Henneberg, smiling, took out a second coin and



threw it to the lad, who, crying out: "Thanks, Prince!" disappeared into the crowd.

Henneberg then assisted the five ladies to enter the four-seated vehicle, closed the door, and was about to thrust a five-franc piece into the driver's hand, as he gave him the street and number; but this time Koppel objected positively, and paid the fare himself. But Henneberg's liberality had set for him a standard, below which he could not fall, without giving offence to the cabman.

When the ladies were gone, Henneberg conducted the men to his coupé, which was standing half-way between Porte Rapp and the Seine: "Now," he said, "please get in. You will be a little crowded, but there is room for three, in case of need; and you have not very far to go."

"But you?" Koppel said:

"I shall loaf quietly homeward. I like to do it."

"Since we cannot all four sit in the carriage—" began Masmajour with much embarrassment.

"I will sit with the coachman," interposed Oscar, and was about to get up outside.

Henneberg caught him: "Inside, my lad," he said, "inside!" He gently pushed Masmajour into the coupé, Koppel and Oscar following; then shook hands with them rapidly, gave his orders to the coachman, the carriage rolled proudly away, and its inmates quickly lost the owner from sight.

In both carriages, on the way home, Henneberg was discussed. Blanche considered him handsome and agreeable—objected to him, however, that he was not very attentive to young ladies, that he had scarcely once spoken to them, and had talked only with their mothers and the gentlemen. Adèle listened dreamily. Her sister rattled on, and when she said finally to Elsa: "Why don't you marry your countryman?" Madame Masmajour reproved the girl sharply, and bade her be silent.

In the coupé Masmajour was inquiring, though discreetly, about Henneberg's position,—was he an officer? He had always imagined the Uhlan officers

were like that,—tall slender, active, elegant, of commanding appearance, speaking French fluently—as he looked at Henneberg it seemed to him the man only needed the uniform. On Koppel's reply that his friend was not an officer, and, as the only son of a widow, had never served in the army; also that, notwithstanding his commanding air, he had followed in earlier life the peaceful vocation of a schoolmaster, all kinds of silent thoughts took possession of Masmajour's mind.

At home Frau Käthe said, when they were in their bedroom: "Do you know, Hugo, I have no real pleasure in our new relations with Henneberg. He seem to me too lavish. He throws his money about too much."

"By no means," Koppel answered; "that's a mere illusion. If you consider carefully, he did not spend so very much. We might have done it ourselves, without extravagance, but we did not care to do it. Do you know why he makes this impression of being so lavish? It is from his impulsive character. When anything occurs to him, he doesn't wait one minute to think, but puts it in action immediately. Whether it costs much or little, he does not inquire. Generally it is the case that it costs little. But the grand air is the same as if it were expensive. Where you or I feel under restraint, he stands erect. We creep carefully; he steps out. He seems to me like a man who possesses a magic wand. What can interfere with him? He pays no attention to obstacles, because he knows that they vanish when he lifts his wand. The aspect of the world must be quite different to the possessor of such a tool from what it is to us."

Frau Käthe had yawned several times during her husband's long monologue. "Your imagination is flying off with you again!" she murmured, half asleep, and wished her husband good-night; but Koppel, though rather tired, for a long time lay awake.

CHAPTER IV.

A DINNER-PARTY.

A FEW days after this evening, the Koppels received a letter from Henneberg, inviting them to dinner on the following Saturday to meet a few friends; the Baroness Agostini with her husband would be there.

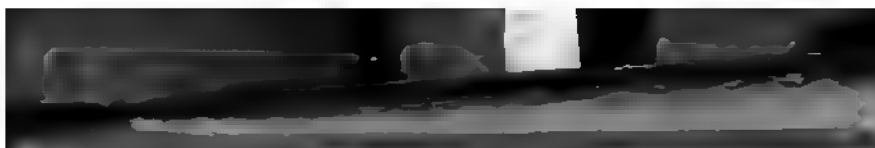
Frau Käthe's first thought was to decline. She had no toilette with which to go among millionaires and baronesses, and since she felt herself as good as the others, she could not endure to appear among them as Cinderella. Koppel, however, talked her out of this idea. It wouldn't do to refuse the invitation, he said, after Henneberg had been their guest. Henneberg was too considerate to bring them into collision with mere money-bags and fashion-plates. To meet a new circle, might bring about relations that would be of use to the children. This process of reasoning did not at all convince Frau Käthe; in fact, she was particularly unwilling to think of possible results from the new acquaintances to be made. But since she never opposed her husband unless the need were extreme, she consented to go.

When the Koppels, on the designated evening, presented themselves at Henneberg's residence, it was all alight with countless electric lamps. In the great antechamber, four servants in dress-coats with metal buttons, white gloves, and white ties, were making themselves useful to the guests. The splendour of the rooms and the richness of their furniture amazed Frau Käthe, who had never before seen anything of the kind except as Baedeker-sights in palaces of kings.

The walls of the great, four-windowed salon, into which they were ushered, were covered with Lyons-silk tapestry of a delicate salmon-pink, bordered with narrow panels, gold-rimmed, and having in low relief motifs of golden quivers and arrows, and rose-garlands.

The portières and window-curtains were of heavy red velvet with gold fringes and cords; between the windows stood ebony cabinets, inlaid with ivory, containing collections of Dresden china, of painted fans, and of eighteenth-century miniatures in very valuable settings. Bronze tables, some with mosaic tops, others with plate-glass, supported vases of malachite and jasper, silver-gilt cups with embossed figures, oriental long-necked cans and beakers, and Chinese sword-hilts of jade.

The furniture, of silk tapestry to match the walls, had gilded wood-work. Under the mantelpiece of very rich different coloured marbles, big logs were blazing upon the great iron fire-dogs, topped with chimæra-heads in bronze, and the heat was pleasantly lessened by tall embroidered screens. The eye, at first caught by the dominant splendour of gold and polished marble and silk, presently found time to appreciate the softer charm of the artistic wealth which adorned the room: a vast ceiling-painting showed nude Loves and goddesses upon the airy clouds of a delicate blue sky, an agreeable harmony of rose, white, and forget-me-not; on ebony easels, draped with purple velvet and twisted gold cords, in odd, whimsical frames, were little pictures of Van Beers and Weerts,—elegantly-dressed young women, some of whom with a refined attractiveness, others with sheer impudence, solicited a glance; on the walls a few Raffaellis, where were to be seen rag-pickers, beggar-women with hungry children clinging to them,—forms of poverty cruelly depicted,—a heartless intentional contrast to the luxury of the room, making it more piquant, but also a Mene, Tekel, to the revelers going to and fro here; on the mantel, between two beautiful vases and a pair of many-branched ingeniously twisted rococo silver-candlesticks, there was a rare marble by Clodion, a Leda with the Swan, of affected refinement and insolent sensuality. Along the edge of the ceiling ran a cornice of flameless lamps; every picture in the room had its own light, also the mantel, the cabinets and the divans in the corners. There was no uniformity as to the



lighting, and this made it somewhat confusing, but it brought out various details in the general effect with great picturesque strength.

In the salon, as the Koppels entered, there stood by the fire, surrounding Henneberg, a group of four men, whom the master of the house introduced as: Count Beira, Monsieur Kohn, Pierre, the famous painter, and Martini, a distinguished sculptor. Henneberg at once devoted himself to the somewhat intimidated Frau Käthe, showing her pictures and little things, and urging her especially to feel herself perfectly at home. Koppel, meanwhile, joined in the conversation of the group of men, to whom Monsieur Kohn was talking fluently and brilliantly on the sculpture of the eighteenth century, in words of no great meaning, but weighty and connoisseur-like to the ear. He interested Koppel, who sought to determine what the man was; the voice was the voice of Jacob, but the hands were the hands of Esau: according to what he was saying, he might be a journalist, or an author, or perhaps even a professor of the History of Art; but his early fatness, the young head already bald, the luxuriant side-whiskers, the gardenia in the button-hole of the evening-coat, the great cat's-eye which was his only shirt-stud, indicated him as a financier or stock-jobber.

The servant at the door announced: *M. le Général et madame Zagal!* and following their name and title appeared a short, fat man of dark complexion, short, bulbous nose with round nostrils, and thick lips; on his arm an also short and also fat lady, the tint of whose complexion could not be discovered under the geologic strata of powder and paint, but whose features showed a certain race-resemblance to those of her husband. Both were still young; the general wore immense, apparently somewhat barbaric, Orders on the breast of his coat, and the lady was attired in a bottle-green silk with lace overdress, and wore so many jewels that she clanked at every step, as if she were clad in scale-armour. An overpowering perfume of corylopsis went before her and followed after her,

so that she was an unpleasant neighbour to persons whose sense of smell was acute. The lady spoke somewhat loudly ; the general, in a scrupulously low voice ; both with an accent strong enough to disperse a thunder-cloud. The entrance of this new couple caused Koppel to draw nearer to Kohn. The latter, at once began using German, of an accent that betrayed the Frankfort man. To these two Count Beira joined himself, who also spoke German, and very plainly showed himself a Hamburger. When some movement among the different groups, on the entrance of another guest, the painter Recollet, caused the Count to move away, Koppel said to Kohn : " How did this Portuguese gentleman get his native German, and his Hanseatic dialect ? "

Kohn laughed.

" Portuguese is complimentary. The only Portuguese about the gentleman is his title of count, which he has not had very long. He is a worthy Herr Dettmer from Hamburg, who has been establishing street railways and founding banks in Goa, Macao, and Portugal. The heavy millions that he has brought home are much more useful to him than his title."

Again was heard the voice of the servant at the door :

" *Monsieur le baron Agostini et madame la baronne,*" Henneberg hastened to meet them. The baron was more tired, more shrunken, and more wrinkled than ever. But the monocle was firm in his eye, and the stiff moustache and *mouche* were of the same impossible black. The baroness wore a two-toned silk, dove's breast and pale lilac, with a rose-coloured vest and lace sleeves, through which her arms showed bare to the shoulders. In her dark hair glittered a very remarkable diamond star ; around her neck were three rows of a necklace of pearls, as large as peas and of the purest water ; and in her hand she carried a fan gold-mounted and painted by Fragonard. She looked very different from the person whom the Koppels had lately seen. She carried her head high, her mouth had a hard expression, her dark eyes had a

strange and fixed look ; she seemed an angry and scornful queen, who had come forth from her fast-locked secret life for no other purpose than to maltreat her subjects. When, however, she saw Frau Käthe seated near the chimney, the hardness for a moment disappeared from her face. With a slight response to the salutation of the men and the bow of the general's wife, she crossed to Frau Käthe—an extremely simple and humble figure in her plain gown of dark blue silk—extended her hand cordially, and took a seat beside her in the arm-chair which Koppel had hastened to bring. There remained nothing of the, so to speak, official expression, which her whole bearing had had when she entered the room ; she looked gentle and kind, as she began to chat with Frau Käthe.

While Henneberg presented the artists, one after another, to the ladies and left them there, the general paid his court to Baron Agostini.

"All the professions are represented here this evening," Kohn said jokingly ; "the military, the educational, and the millionaire."

"You, I suppose, belong to the last ?" Koppel rejoined.

"I am quite aware," replied Kohn, with hypocritical modesty, "that I have, unhappily, neither the honour to be a general or a professor."

"Accept my congratulations !"

"Oh, there's no cause, Herr Professor, in the presence of such multi-millionaires as Henneberg, Herr Dettmer, or even Baron Agostini. I am a very insignificant person."

—"His Majesty the King of Laos, and the gentlemen of his suite!" was the sudden announcement from the doorway. Koppel looked in amazement. The foreign potentate was a tall man of about thirty-five, with very thick hair standing up like a brush, a very long, thin moustache under the hooked nose, and a very noticeable, dull white, streaked scar in the left cheek. Behind him came an older man and two younger men, all three with the ribbon of a Grand Cross, red, with green edge, under the waistcoat. The

elder man, short of stature, with a respectable bald head and a moustache, was solemn and stiff. Henneberg presented him as the Duke of — an unpronounceable name, the king's chancellor. The two young men,—the "Court Chamberlain, vicomte d'Idouville," and the "Aide-de-camp, baron de —" and again a name which no one understood,—were, on the contrary, lively, smiling, and skipping personages.

At the entrance of this train, Koppel unconsciously wrinkled his brows. Being a German, he was rather vain of his knowledge of geography; but of a kingdom of Laos, in ancient or modern history, he had never yet heard. Was this a very undignified joke? He could not think it possible. The character of Henneberg himself, and of, at least, some of the guests present, rendered this incredible. Moreover, no one seemed to be smiling when Henneberg addressed the king as "Sire," and some of the guests, especially the general and his wife and the artists, made a circle around the newcomer, in true courtly fashion. But if it were no joke, what could be the position of this unexpected king?

He had, for some time, no opportunity to gratify his curiosity; at last Henneberg came up to him, took his arm, and drew him towards the king. "Sire, a friend and fellow-countryman, Professor Koppel."

"Very glad, Herr Professor," said the king, "very glad," and he graciously extended his hand to Koppel. The latter took it in his own without enthusiasm. The king stood thus, his hand in Koppel's for a moment and exclaimed to his suite: "Look here, gentlemen! The German professor, the secret of Germany's strength,—the German professor and the army! I wish that we were so far along in Laos, that we could have professors to depend upon!" And he gave way to a short, self-satisfied, royal laugh. The three gentlemen in attendance, with a simultaneous movement, bowed, and also, they all smiled. General Zagal laughed. The king turned away, leaving Koppel standing, and went across to where the Baroness Agostini sat, before whom he bowed low.

"Madame la baronne," he said: "may I have the honour to kiss your hand?"

The baroness, on the king's entrance had resumed her stately frigid mien, and she now replied to him in the most distant way: "Excuse me—" laying her fingers in his extended hand, and drawing them back at once, as he bent to kiss them. "I hope that you are well," she said coldly.

"You are most kind, baroness," the king replied. "My duties give me much toil and many cares, but I take care of myself. Is monsieur le baron well? Oh! there he is." And he went across the room to where the baron, turning his back to him, stood, with Count Beira before one of Van Beers' pictures.

Frau Käthe also had been much astonished on the announcement of a royal guest. Her woman's quickness of observation however, soon detected that Henneberg took no special trouble about the king, while the great people in the salon, Baron Agostini and Count Beira scarcely noticed him, and the baroness seemed to repel his advances: whereupon Frau Käthe decided that his majesty was of no consequence to her.

"What sort of a king is that?" she asked, as he moved away.

"His real name is Paul Maigrier," the baroness replied. "He is said to have been a naval officer. Malicious tongues assert that he was a waiter on board ship. He is said to have seized the territory of a savage tribe in Eastern Asia;" another story is that the inhabitants willingly chose him for king. I don't know the truth of it. There are people who take him seriously. He has founded an Order, he has issued postage-stamps, he bestows titles of nobility, and it is said that he is trying to establish diplomatic relations with the courts of Europe."

"How very extraordinary! But what is he doing in Paris? Is he here on a visit?"

"He says that he is here to obtain recognition from the French government. He is canvassing among

officers and officials. I think he is specially endeavouring to obtain money."

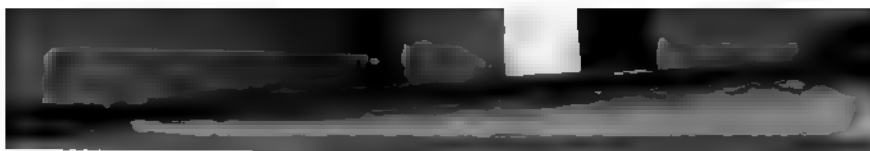
"So?" This evidently cleared up the subject for Frau Käthe; the riddle was solved.

At this moment the maître-d'hôtel announced that dinner was served. To her amazement Henneberg gave his arm to Frau Käthe, after he had whispered Koppel to take out the baroness: the king made Madame Zagal extremely happy, who really reddened with delight under all her paint, and the other gentlemen followed singly. Next to the salon was a music-room without portières, having only muslin curtains at the two windows. The white-lacquered walls were panelled with narrow gilt mouldings and there was no carpet of any kind on the polished floor; a grand piano with rich decorations on a gold-lacquered ground, two pedal-harps, some ebony music-rests, and a row of light, gilded, red-silk cushioned chairs were its only furniture. Beyond, was the dining-room, where six servants, standing at regular intervals around the table, awaited the entrance of the host and his guests.

Henneberg, with a bow, indicated to Frau Käthe her place at his right hand. She coloured violently, and said in a low voice: "It is impossible! The baroness ——"

But the baroness at that moment passed her, and whispered: "It was at my special request, gracious lady," and thereupon took her seat at the left of the host, whence she looked smilingly across to Frau Käthe, who, also smiling, now seated herself without further objection. Her neighbour at the right was Baron Agostini; beyond him sat General Zagal, while the baroness had Koppel at her left and beyond him the painter, Pierre. Across the table from himself, Henneberg had placed the king, with Madame Zagal at his right, then Kohn, and the painter Martini; and at his left, Beira, the court chamberlain, vicomte d'Idouville, and the painter Recollet, while the aide-de-camp and the chancellor were at the two ends of the table.

While Frau Käthe drew off her gloves and folded



them carefully she looked around her at the room. The walls were panelled to shoulder height with walnut-wood, finely carved, in high relief, in garlands of fruit and flowers, here and there picked out with gold or colour. Thence to the panelled ceiling, the wall was covered with golden-brown leather, with stamped, coloured arabesques. There was something barbaric in the display of a collection of plates and dishes which covered the walls;—among which Cypriot ware with copper glaze and yellow Italian majolica were conspicuous. Frau Käthe had no idea of the value of these ceramic treasures, but she had a consciousness of being in the presence of vast wealth, which also was exhibited in the three-winged buffet, suggestive of a high altar, and in the dazzling gold and silver plate of a tall cabinet opposite.

The table itself was extremely elegant. The silver dishes were not round but square, and on one rim decorated with a coat-of-arms in heraldic enamel-colours. The same coat-of-arms was on each of the seven or eight glasses of the finest crystal which stood at each plate, and was engraved on all the silver table-utensils of the dinner, and the smaller gold dessert spoons, knives, and forks. There was a large silver centre-piece, the triumph of Venus; and two lesser groups, at the ends of the table, represented a Bacchante and Silenus, and a Bacchus with two thyrsus-bearers. There were innumerable flameless lamps along the walls, but, besides, four enormous seven-branched candelabra stood on the table, each branch carrying seven pink-shaded candles. In two interlocked wavy lines, there lay, the whole length of the table, garlands of rare dahlias, expensive orchids and forced delicate lilacs. Before each of the three ladies lay, in a silver bouquet-holder, a great bunch of carefully-selected unfragrant flowers,—gloxinias, stanhopeas, and very large, pinkish chrysanthemums. The menu was in the form of a gilt-framed picture on a little silver easel.

For a time Frau Käthe was lost in observation of all this display. A servant pouring golden-tinted, fra-

grant Madeira into the smallest of the glasses at her plate, startled her back into real life.

"I shall never have the courage to invite you to our table again," she could not resist saying to Henneberg.

"Gracious lady, do not be so cruel!" he exclaimed, almost shocked. "If you knew how I enjoyed that day! All was again so home-like—I was again young and merry!"

"But a person who is accustomed to such magnificence——"

"Oh, that doesn't mean so much after all! It seems like a good deal, I know, but the whole thing, just as it stands, cost me but a trifle."

"Nay, nay!"

"Just as I tell you, Frau Doctor. I must explain that I took the apartment furnished. It cost its former owner half a million to fit it up; I have his original bills. I gave him about one-seventh of the whole sum. The poor fellow had speculated, was ruined, and had to sell."

"One-seventh of the value?"

"The value? Let us see. To the seller this would mean one thing, and to the buyer another. If the owner had been obliged to resort to the dealers in second-hand things, he would have got far less than what I gave him."

"I think I should haunt my possessions like a ghost if I had paid so much for them and sold them for so little."

"Now, gracious lady, in the first place, I have no fear of ghosts; secondly, the seller is, all this time, still alive; and thirdly, his half-million did not cost *him* much either. He gained it at the Bourse."

"Then he won it from some other man; and what it cost that man, we do not know."

"Oh, well! if you are going into the question so deeply as that, everything we have is, in the first instance, a sun-gift."

Frau Käthe smiled at this idea of dragging into business-life the comparative philologists' haunting mythus,

and asked, amicably changing the subject : "The coat of arms, then, is that of the previous owner?"

"Well!—no," replied Henneberg, hesitating slightly, "it is my own; that is to say," he continued, as she glanced at him suddenly, "it is really my mother's, who was a von Milowitz."

Frau Käthe regretted her inconsiderate question, and it was a great relief to her when a formal, polite remark of Baron Agostini enabled her to let the subject drop completely.

Meantime the king was talking louder all the time, and in drawing the general attention to himself, put an end to the conversation of neighbours with each other.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "we have in our country all the material for prosperity: a fruitful soil, valuable forests, water-routes, gold mines, and mines of precious stones. We need only immigration, especially German," and he bowed to his host; "but, most of all, capital."

No one made any answer, and, turning to Agostini, he continued:

"Yes, monsieur le baron, capital is all that we need, to form a new centre of French—of European—civilization out there."

"Capital would be somewhat endangered," the baron said, with a faint smile.

"Only if it came in too small an amount. In that case, I could not, perhaps, carry the work through. Let me have money enough, however, and the thing is dead sure. Gentlemen fail to consider that Europe is now over-populated. What are you doing here in this old corner of the world? You are buying three per cent. bonds, which, by and by, will become one per cent. or may have no more value than so much wall-paper. You do not appreciate men of determined character, who open up new countries. You do not understand what we are doing for you. I call upon you to testify, Count Beira, whether Eastern Asia is not a place where a man may get millions."

The person addressed nodded affirmatively.

"I tell you," the king went on, with increasing fervour, "it will be well for those who grasp in time the great historical fact that the business rôle of Europe is played out. We are too close to each other, here. To-day we nearly all have the same wants; to-morrow we shall be exactly alike in this respect. To satisfy these wants is, however, impossible. We have not sun enough for that in Europe."

"Again the sun-myth," Frau Käthe whispered to Henneberg.

"That is no harm," returned the latter; "it pays to listen to the man."

"Of itself, without our effort, our parsimonious soil will bring forth rye and oats," the king continued.

"Also truffles and the juice of the vine," interrupted Kohn, pointing with his knife at the plate and the glass.

"But not for all men," replied the king, stimulated by his own talk. "There you have the secret of your wretched Socialism, of which we, in Laos, know nothing at all. The aim of prudent governments is however to secure truffles and wine to everybody."

"If you can work this miracle," Baron Agostini remarked.

"I have the best chance in the world to do it, in Laos! But let us understand each other: when I say for all, I mean for all white men. Of course I am thoroughly convinced that there is an order of precedence among the races. It is our affair to subjugate the coloured races. We are the natural robber-aristocracy,—or let us say, the sword aristocracy—of humanity, and have our duties and our rights as such. We protect the inferior races against each other, we give them with wise moderation as much civilization as they can bear, and, with this, security and the administration of justice; and it is only equitable, that they, in return, should work for us and obey us. The only remunerative work for white humanity in the future is to take possession of the rest of the world, some directly through the use of their two hands,

others indirectly, through the use of money. The former class eat the pineapple in the place where it grows; the latter have it brought to them: this is a matter for individual choice."

"I will have my pineapple sent here," Kohn declared, "I am afraid my appetite wouldn't be very good in Laos."

"That is where your theory is wrecked, sire," said Count Beira; "the food is better in those lands favoured by the sun, but life is not so agreeable, and it is not so long, there. Better rye-bread and health in Europe, than pineapples and a liver-complaint in Laos!"

"Bah!" cried the king contemptuously, "I say, better a short life as owner and ruler, than a long one as dependent and labourer. And, after all, what is long? What is short? The length of a life is not measured by calendar years, but by the number and variety of sensations. A shepherd in my native Camargue remains a boy, without experiences or memories, though he live to be a hundred. I am now thirty-six, and were I to die to-day, I could not complain that my life had been a barren one."

Koppel at last struck in: "What you are developing," he said, "is the theory of exploitation. White men shall no longer exploit each other; unitedly, they shall exploit the coloured races; but, through transformation into parasites, they will perish. For what has made the white race strong, what has given them their superiority over the others, is exactly that inexorable stress under which we have been obliged to live here in our barren Europe. The niggard sun has compelled us to labour and to be self-denying; and to this we owe our ability."

"Very well," rejoined the king, who was a ready disputant, "but we have been storing up strength all this time that we might be ready one day to spend it. Economy is not an end in itself. A man economizes in order to be able, at some future time, to spend freely. The white race has, until now, guarded its treasure; it is time to break open the money-box and

convert the yellow-boys into pleasure. Observe, my dear professor, that the exploitation which I preach, is more moral and credible, also a trifle more dangerous and therefore braver, than that of the white race by the white race."

"I am, on the whole, of the king's opinion," remarked Henneberg, "only I am not fond of the word you use. Why talk about exploitation, when individuals and classes simply live according to their natural aptitudes and inclinations? Some are stronger and some are weaker, and each acts as he has the strength to act. The sheep modestly eats grass, and would not touch lapwing's eggs. The animal's modesty is no merit. The wolf eats the sheep; no one ought to blame him for this repast. Man has not chosen his place in the animal kingdom; it is allotted to him by nature. His only duty is to fill that place with complete self-development."

"Bravo!" cried the king, "I tell you, my dear Baron Henneberg, I shall never be content till I have you in my cabinet."

Baron Henneberg! Koppel and his wife pricked up their ears, but avoided the interchange of even a single look. They were learning, by degrees, to be surprised at nothing, in this house.

"You are too good," Henneberg returned in a slightly sarcastic tone. "I should only be qualified for the ministry of finance, or for that of public instruction; and either of these, in your kingdom, will I fear, remain sinecures for awhile."

"Oho! Just what I am working for is to find something that, at least, a minister of finance can occupy himself with."

Over Baron Agostini's wrinkled face again flitted a faint smile, while Kohn winked across the table at Koppel, and said softly in German: "What a joke!"

Meantime the luxurious dinner went on, with its successive courses and its variety of wines in swift succession, and the pitch of the talk grew constantly higher. Between the king of Laos and Kohn there began to be a farcical contest for the lead in the con-



versation. Kohn had a desire to talk with his neighbour the sculptor Martini, and with the painter Pierre across the table, about art; the king domineered over the whole party, with considerations on the financial future of his kingdom. In spite of the annihilating looks of the royal suite, in spite of repeated demonstrations of displeasure from his majesty personally, who would suddenly break off in the middle of a sentence and allow a significant pause to ensue, Kohn held his ground, and the king was obliged to content himself with a considerably reduced audience.

The ices, the bonbons, the delicious fruit were eaten, the champagne glasses stood empty, the *maître d'hôtel* opened both leaves of the dining-room door, and the party returned into the salon, to take their coffee, and to choose among the six or eight liqueurs which were immediately brought in. The king, with his sharp eyes, had observed that both his host and the Baroness Agostini showed special attention to the Koppels; and he accordingly, as soon as they had returned into the salon, approached Koppel, and drew him into a friendly conversation as to his work in Paris. The king's suite made a half-circle behind him as he talked, and General Zagal added himself to the group as file-leader.

Koppel was secretly displeased at the situation, which to him appeared a ridiculous parody, and became angry. The king seemed not to notice this, and after he had kept up the conversation for a few minutes, he said suddenly, and speaking in a loud voice: "You please me, Professor, you please me greatly. You have an extraordinary mind." With a rapid movement, he drew from his button-hole the red and green rosette of his Order, and continued: "Accept this. It is a gratification to me to appoint you commander of my Order of S. Paul;" and he attempted to put the rosette into the buttonhole of Koppel's coat. But this buttonhole was sewed up! The king was somewhat disconcerted, for the unexpected obstacle destroyed the effect of his act, and the situation threatened to become ludicrous, if he struggled

long with the refractory lappel of the Professor's coat. His suite came to the rescue. The aid-de-camp sprang forward and took the rosette from the royal hand, the chamberlain hastened to the dining-room and brought, triumphant, a knife with which he opened the buttonhole, and the rosette could now be suitably inserted. It all happened so quickly that Koppel had time neither to make any movement himself, nor to utter a word. The king also had already moved away to another group, and was making an attempt to draw Baron Agostini into a corner. But the chancellor approached Koppel, who was half-embarrassed, half-amused, and said solemnly: "Monsieur le commandeur, accept my congratulations. The chancery will complete the formalities of investiture, and will send you the diploma." Also, General Zagal congratulated him, and asked in a low voice if he had had the honour to know his majesty for a long time. On being told that Koppel had met the king this evening for the first time, the general became thoughtful, moved away from Koppel, and organized strategic movements to reach the king's side.

Koppel was still undecided whether courtesy required him to endure the ridiculous gew-gaw in the lappel of his coat so long as he was in the king's sight, or whether he might follow his inclination and fling the rosette at once into a corner, when Henneberg touched him on the shoulder and said:

"Perhaps you would like to smoke?"

"Thank you: I should," and followed him into the cosy room at the left of the great salon, which was fitted up as a kind of Spanish *mirador*: a stalactite-ceiling; *azulejos*, with blue, gold and red arabesques, on the walls; broad divans around the sides of the room; in front of them, very beautiful Persian prayer-rugs, small, pearl-inlaid sandal-wood tables, silver narghilehs with inlay of turquoises, and even Chinese opium-pipes, the latter only as curiosities, however. On the tables lay a variety of consequential cigars, each in its corked glass-reed.

While Koppel was selecting one of these, he narrated to Henneberg his adventure with the king.

Henneberg laughed at his vexed tone, and said : " Yes ; he plays these tricks now and then. He has conferred upon me the Grand Cross of his toy. You are displeased,—do you know that the man is overrun by people who beg him, as the greatest favour, for the simple cross of his Order, and are ready to pay round sums for it ?"

" Such things make one proud of being a civilized man ! But who is the fellow, really ?"

" Fellow, if you choose ; but, really, an extraordinary person. Of his early life I know nothing ; all sorts of things are said but nothing is proved, or at least nothing disgraceful. Some years ago he went, I don't know how, to Indo-China ; he there in some way bewitched some odd sort of forest-people, and it is said that they did actually choose him for their ruler. The country appears to have been independent at the time, but China, Siam, England and France now lay claim to it, and so it is not very probable that he will be permitted to play the part of king for any length of time. It is possible, however, that in the end he will be appointed Resident, or that he will in some way obtain possession of land or mining properties. Meanwhile, with an amusing blend of slyness and boyishness, he is trying to get as large a loan of money as possible."

" That is, he is in short, an adventurer on a large scale."

" You are rather too severe ; he is an imaginative person—"

" That, to a certain extent, all swindlers are."

" But he is really something more than that. He is an adventurer of the grand breed, daring and fearless, one of those domineering natures that, sword in hand, hew out for themselves their own fate in this world. Clear-headed enough, besides, to philosophize about his beast-of-prey career, and to make his own case part of a system. He interests me much. He is a late scion of the race of the conquistadore, the fillibusters,

and the corsairs, with a highly piquant, extremely modern, disregard of all principles. Again, I find in him traits which I have good reason to recognize. This makes him attractive to me."

Koppel shook his head.

"But the suite?" he said.

"Sure enough. These people are thrown in. They are, however, inoffensive idiots, who do very well as supernumeraries. The chancellor, with his solemnity, his Grand Cross, and his ducal title, is worth a journey to see. He is said to be a book-keeper out of employment, and for stipend to have his meals at the king's table and his lodging at a tailor's. The aide-de-camp has really been a subaltern in an Algerian regiment. The vicomte is genuine, a real vicomte d'Idouville, a stylish little fellow, with neither brains nor money nor occupation; he is really pathetic, for out of what little self-respect he has left, he persuades himself to take his position seriously."

"And who is this general, that is as be-ribboned as a Whitsun ox?"

"He comes from Honduras, and has been minister. He has carried on extensive financial operations, and has been in consequence obliged to flee his country. His fellow-countrymen first erected an equestrian statue of him and then picturesquely hanged it on the gallows. However, that did him no harm, for he had brought off with him to Europe a prodigal number of millions, and is now about to double that number by a great financial undertaking. Did you notice how he swelled up when the king was talking about the destiny of the white race as rulers? He had to laugh out of the wrong side of his mouth, for of course you see that the fellow is a full-blooded Indian."

"I can't understand why you associate with people like this."

"Why not? I find them more amusing than correct people are. The latter are always more insipid, not always more honourable, and unquestionably more tiresome than the former. Without going to the theatre, I have a comedy performed in my own draw-

ing-room. Only one must never forget that he is looking on at a harlequin act."

"Hm! Are you sure that your guests enjoy performing with harlequins?"

"They are not doing it!" Henneberg exclaimed "they are spectators like myself. Do you know, I think you are a little ungrateful! I brought these people together expressly for your amusement. When you honour me again with your presence, you shall meet truly right-angled society, gray on gray, and we will perform our devotions with chamber-music and cards, like the gentry in Spremberg."

At this moment Kohn came into the smoking-room, and remarked, with an odd smile, as he took a cigar: "Doctor, there are dreadful things going on in your salon!"

"Since you mention them so cheerfully, my dear Kohn——"

"I smile because I am safe out of it; but cold chills are still running down my back."

"Tell us all about it."

"The king seems to be determined to raise a forced loan. Agostini has craftily taken shelter between Frau Professor and the baroness, and there, he is at present safe from attack. Upon me, however, his majesty fell with full violence. Vainly I sought refuge behind the artists. He requires—to carry on the business of the State—instantly and unconditionally, a thousand francs, or, it may be, two thousand. The man has the strength of a force-pump! At this moment he has the Indian by the nose-ring. That poor fellow is lost beyond recovery!"

Henneberg grew serious. "But I forbade him to operate in my salon," he said, in a displeased voice; he rose from the divan and left the room.

"I am really hard on the rascal," Kohn said; "he will have nothing for breakfast to-morrow, very likely, if he gets no money here. But when he asks for a thousand francs ——"

"That does not prevent your offering him twenty."

"Bravo, Herr Professor! You appreciate the situa-

tion. But that is the way it is ; we may understand that it is all a swindle, but we can't quite get over the impression such words as 'king,' and 'chancellor,' produce upon us from the force of habit."

Henneberg, at this moment, returned, and tranquilly seated himself again.

"Well, have you tied him up?" asked Kohn.

"I hope so."

"Did you give him the thousand francs?"

"Five hundred did the business."

"He must have got the rest out of Zagal. He seemed to me very eager."

"An expensive amusement!" Koppel said, under his breath.

"That is what it's for!" replied Henneberg cheerfully. "What other use is there for money? Our coins at the present epoch are not so very handsome that we want to keep them for scarf-pins. The only other thing is to use them for *pourboires*."

"And for the purchase of fine pictures," Kohn interposed and went towards the painter Pierre, whose figure, at the moment, framed itself in the door-way.

"For *pourboires*!" cried Koppel. "Have you come to despise your fellow-creatures to that degree?"

"My dear friend, perhaps you do not know the pleasure of smelting an insolent, obstinate clown into a servant as flexible as a snake. You have to do it, before you know what a talent in this direction human nature has. I said to you just now that I enjoyed seeing harlequins perform. But that is not all. I seem to myself like the ring-master, who stands in the centre, and cracks his long whip, and calls out to a dozen horses: Leap! halt!"

The *sec* of the dinner had manifestly had its effect upon Henneberg. His eyes glittered, and he showed an almost feverish vivacity which Koppel had never before seen in him. Koppel looked at him surprised, and said, after a brief silence, in a tone of honest sympathy: "I had not noticed before that you were so frightfully unhappy

Henneberg replied: "You have singular fancies! Do I look like an unhappy person?"

"We may go beyond appearances," Koppel answered. "I have no right to try to win confessions from you; but I am perfectly conscious of an intolerable bitterness behind your vindictive pleasure in debasing men by the use of your money."

Henneberg remained silent, and Koppel resumed: "I remember once a very different ambition of yours. At that time you were poor. Were not those days better than these?"

"Ach!" cried Henneberg, vexed that he had allowed himself to be taken by surprise, "you mean the time when it was my ambition to send in to the Academy a paper upon the commonly-received theory of algebraic equations. What would have come of it? The highest satisfaction that I could expect was that some old professor would nod graciously and mutter: 'Not bad.' That was the life-purpose of a school-boy. We have outgrown that!"

"I can only wish that in the following out of the present purpose of your life, you may find self-approval."

"Do you doubt it?" Henneberg questioned, almost angry.

"That I would not allow myself to do," Koppel answered kindly, as he looked at his watch and rose.

"What, are you going?"

"Yes, dear friend, and you will let me slip away quietly, not to take ceremonious leave of your king. And would you have the kindness to let my wife know?"

There was nothing Henneberg could do but quietly to call away Frau Käthe from the side of the baroness, around whom the artists had made an admiring group, and conduct her through the smoky little room into the antechamber. He expressed the hope of seeing them soon again at his house, and another time more with friends, and he put his coupé at their service for the homeward drive. Koppel sought to refuse, but Henneberg insisted; he had ordered the carriage ex-

pressly, and it was at the door, upon which they could do no otherwise than accept the offered kindness.

As they drove away from the house, Frau Käthe said at once : "Do you know, Hugo, we shall never go there again?"

"But why not?" asked Koppel, amazed.

"There is something wrong about it all; and I am sure it cannot last. These kings, these dukes; a colleague of yours who reappears as a baron; a girl, once a poor teacher, who now has, heaven knows how many millions to spend, and orders statues and pictures from artists—there's something about it that makes me uneasy. The only thing about which I rejoice, is that I have induced the baroness to have her bonnets made at Madame Masmajour's."

"Did you think of that?"

"Why shouldn't I? I didn't care about anything else, this evening; nor taste comfort in anything else," she added.

"I don't understand your feeling, dear Käthe."

"Will you promise not to call me superstitious? I was very much oppressed the whole time in the gilded salon. I was constantly asking myself: What will be the end of all these people? You may laugh, Hugo, but it seemed to me like a Belshazzar's Feast."

Koppel made no answer, but his wife's words sank deep into his mind.

CHAPTER V.

THE BARONESS TELLS HER STORY.

"Is madame la baronne at home?" asked Henneberg, in the vestibule of the house in the rue Fortuny; and, with the demeanour of a master in his own right, he handed his stick to the lackey in blue and silver, who had opened the door to him.

The servant took the stick with a sort of hesitation, made no offer to remove Henneberg's superb fur coat, and finally said, with a glance at the stair-landing where stood a second lackey: "I do not know—that is, I mean—madame la baronne is in-doors, but she does not receive. She has a headache," Henneberg was surprised. The word "headache," he had never before heard in this house. The evening before, when he had taken leave of the baroness, in her box at the Grand Opera, at the close of the second act of *Faust*, she had been, as usual, perfectly well.

"Is she in bed?"

"I think not."

"Has she seen the doctor?"

"I do not know. I have not seen him come. Perhaps Jean would know."

The second lackey had meantime come down. "Oh, monsieur le baron," he whispered submissively confidential, as a servant will be, who has received many *pourboires*,—"we are having a hard day; madame la baronne is in a state! But no doubt monsieur le baron will be admitted. Perhaps monsieur le baron will be able to soothe her." With an aimable grin he assisted Henneberg to take off the fur coat, and as he hung it up, he said: "I will send the femme de chambre to monsieur le baron."

A few minutes later this person appeared in the first salon, where Henneberg awaited her.

"What is the matter?" he asked, going to meet the woman as she came in.

The maid cast an anxious glance at the door leading into the next room and answered hurriedly and in a low voice: "madame la baronne is impossible to-day! Her parroquet died in the night. We found the bird early this morning lying on the floor of its cage. Madame la baronne declares that some of us have killed it, and she would like to kill us all. Monsieur le baron Agostini tried to console her but he had no luck at all. He had to have his breakfast alone, and looked very unhappy when he went out."

Henneberg smiled. The death of a parroquet! That was not such a very tragic affair.

"Will you announce me to madame la baronne."

The femme de chambre looked at him in alarm. "Excuse me, monsieur le baron, I dare not. It would cost me my place. Madame la baronne has expressly forbidden me to disturb her until she rings."

Henneberg reflected a moment; then he said: "I will venture it;" and passing through the second salon and an adjacent smaller room, he reached the boudoir of the baroness. Here he knocked, but there was no answer, therefore he opened the door and went in.

The December afternoon was gray with clouds and fog, and although it was scarcely three o'clock, the shadows of evening already filled the room, which was at all times darkened by heavy curtains, and at this moment received its only light from a blazing wood-fire upon the hearth. Standing across in front of the fire was a chaise-longue of the Empire style, wherein, on gold-embroidered cushions of delicate colours, the baroness reclined, the crimson velvet of her dressing-gown lighted up by the blaze where its train lay in rich folds upon the floor. One hand holding a closed book hung by her side, and with wide-opened, wet eyes, she was fixedly regarding herself in the mirror above the mantel. Hearing some one enter, she started up, and looked in the direction of the sound. She perceived Henneberg, who at her abrupt movement stood still. For a moment, contradictory feelings seemed to strive for mastery in her face; then she sank slowly back again, and dropping her book to the floor, stretched out her hand to him. "It is you," she said, "Henneberg!"

He at once came forward; kissed the extended hand, and drew up a low tabouret beside the chaise-longue. "I have taken the liberty to make my way in, notwithstanding your prohibition. Can you forgive me?"

She was silent a moment, then she said: "But really, you deserve punishment. I require my com-

mands to be obeyed in all cases. But I shall forgive you, for I am very weary of being alone."

She sighed, and passed her hand over her eyes.

"You have wept, dear friend," Henneberg said; "your bird is greatly honoured in his death since you have shed tears for him."

"Do not be sarcastic to-day," she said and her face grew sombre, "it displeases me."

Henneberg bowed.

"My poor lory was the best friend I had in the world,—the only one."

"Your grief makes you unjust, dear friend," Henneberg said: "Do you doubt that you are much beloved."

"Say not that word!" she cried hotly. "I will not hear it. Love? Oh yes, there is plenty, so long as one is young and attractive. We have too much love, but not enough friendship."

"Does not the one include the other?"

"A singular question for so clever a man to ask! The one excludes the other. The one is the opposite of the other. The man who is my friend asks nothing from me, he will not disturb my peace, he is glad to have me content and tranquil. The man who is my lover seeks my destruction, he is ready to sacrifice me to his own passion. I will not have it."

Henneberg's monocle dropped from his eye; he twisted his moustache. "You should know better;" he said, "there is a love that destroys not, that makes no victim; that waits silent and patient, asking nothing, though," he added, slowly and in a very low tone, "hoping for everything."

The baroness shook her head, as if to drive away flies that annoyed her. "No, no," she said, "no more of that, Henneberg. Ach!" she cried, after a minute's pause, with a sudden change of ideas, "why can I not be by the shore of some southern ocean, under a blue sky, on a veranda with flowers about me! With these heavy gray clouds over my head I feel as if I were in a tapestried coffin."

"If you really long for a bright sky and a glittering

ocean, come! Oh, come! It is only to be up and away,—we two! Now, once more! Let us live over again the beautiful days at Hyères!”

“Henneberg,” she said, sharply, “it is not true, what you just said! There were no beautiful days at Hyères! I have forbidden you even to think of them.”

“Yes, you have forbidden me,” he answered; “and it is the most marvellous thing,—this that you, cruel enchantress, have done. Many times I ask myself if I am deceived as to the reality of my memories, and whether those two weeks at Hyères really were nothing but a dream.”

“They were nothing but a dream. One wakes, and a dream is gone; all one has to do is to forget it.”

“If you say so, it was a dream. It is forgotten. But why not dream again, and then again forget?”

The baroness was silent, and looked into the fire.

“Why not, Augusta? Why not?” Henneberg said eagerly, and seized her hand.

The baroness drew her hand away, and started up. “Henneberg,” she said, and fixed her brilliant dark eyes on his. “Are you mad? Must I again do what I did two years ago?”

Henneberg bent his head. “You will not be so cruel with me,” he said. “It was very hard for me then not to see you for months. It would be impossible for me now to endure it.”

“Very well. Then keep closely to our treaty of peace. No memories! No references to the past! The past is dead! It never was alive. You do not love me.”

“Oh!” remonstrated Henneberg.

“You do not say it to me. I do not know it. Otherwise—I must become a stranger to you.”

“If you could but convince me that there is any use in thus torturing me. Why do it? for whose sake?”

“But, my husband—”

“Baron Agostini! You are not serious, dear friend—”

The baroness pushed away some of her cushions and

sat erect in her chaise-longue. Her voice was cold and resolute: "I may have been a bad woman," she said, "but, at least, I am not a dishonourable one. The baron has the unquestioning confidence in me which I require, because I deserve it. He has restored to me the respect of society. On this account I owe him some gratitude."

"Is it not gratitude enough that you give him the happiness of seeing you in his house, at his table? Is it not enough for a feeble, broken-down old man like that—"

"Henneberg!"

"If he is permitted to sun himself in your presence, at every hour of the day or night?"

"Henneberg, I forbid you to speak thus of Baron Agostini. I owe to him more than mere sufferance; and I owe to myself—listen, Henneberg, I owe it to myself—to remain faithful to my promise and my purpose."

Henneberg remained silent, once more twisting his moustache.

The baroness went on more quietly: "Four years ago you had the choice. You might have married me. I should have been very, very happy, had you wished it. You did not wish it, but Agostini did."

"But, dear friend," said Henneberg, dejectedly, "at that time I could not really see that I must decide upon the moment; I think I ought to be allowed to plead extenuating circumstances."

"You pronounce your own condemnation! What are you thinking about? Four years ago your conduct was that of a reasonable person; all you have to do is to be reasonable now."

"And now, you punish me?"

"You are mistaken, Henneberg, and I prove to you your mistake daily. I call you my friend, I associate with you freely——"

"This is the cruelest part of the punishment."

"Be silent, you are incorrigible. You do not know how valuable your friendship must be to me, that I continue to see you as I do. You are the only living

memento that I preserve in my new life of those dreadful days of the past. Do not cause me to regret this last remnant of feeling!"

Henneberg made no answer, but his face grew more sombre.

The baroness remarked it. She held out her hand and said, with a softness of manner of which in rare moments she was capable: "Agree with me, Henneberg, you are an ungrateful person. It is so much better to be my friend than my lover."

"That you might leave me to decide for myself," Henneberg said, with a somewhat distressed smile; and he kissed her hand.

"My friend finds me always gentle, sympathetic, ready to drive away the clouds from his brow, and to make a pleasant hour for him. But a lover—that is something very different! He must tremble before me, he must be the slave of my caprices. Upon him I use my claws, if the whim pleases me, and he must be silent; he must suffer it." Unconsciously her hands made a motion as of claws, while she spoke between her shut teeth.

"You may do that," Henneberg said simply, and lifted her hand to his breast.

She gently withdrew it. "Do not be foolish," she said; "you have no idea how decorous I must be to regain the condition of mind in which I can endure to be alone by day and sleepless by night."

Henneberg looked at her in a slightly derisive manner:

"What?" he said, "do you, the vigorous Augusta, have need of anodynes? Does your citified conscience presume to cry out against your will?"

"Why do you speak of conscience? As it seems to me, I have sinned only against myself, and for that I have only myself to settle with. That has nothing to do with others. But my pride I have not yet been able to heal—scarcely even to console."

"You, at whose feet lies the world? You, the great Baroness Agostini?"

"Yes—I, the great Baroness Agostini! I see my-

self still——” She shuddered violently, and covered her face with her hands.

She remained motionless for a little while, and Henneberg did not venture to interrupt her. It was very still and warm in the perfumed half-light of the room, and Henneberg found himself gradually overpowered by the nerveless melancholy which, like a subtle contagion, seemed to cling in the folds of the heavy draperies.

The baroness let her hands drop upon her lap, gazed fixedly at Henneberg, in a singular way, almost as if she did not see him, and finally said, as if returning into the present from some world of memories: “Do you see this book?” and she picked up the volume which had slipped under the edge of one of her cushions. “This is my journal, which I kept during the three years that I lived in hell. To know me, a person must read this book.”

“You kept a journal?”

“Yes. And after a method of my own invention. It is a kind of book-keeping by double entry. On the left page I wrote the actual events of my life; on the right page, my inward experiences. Do you see? Here, what happened to me; here, what I thought and felt about it.”

“And you will entrust this treasure to me?” Henneberg said, extending his hand to take the book.

She held it fast. “A treasure? Yes, a wonderful treasure! Touch it carefully. Where it does not burn your fingers, it will besmirch them. No. I shall not let it go out of my hands.”

“I can read it here.”

“There are five hundred pages. And I could not sit calmly by, while you turned the leaves. It always frightens me when I read in it by myself; and yet I often do read it, days like this.”

“What an extraordinary creature you are!”

“Perhaps even more so than you think! But here is the complete explanation. When some feeling in myself surprises me, perhaps shocks me, I open this

book. On the left page I can somewhere find an explanation of it."

"It is wrong in you to make me so curious, if you intend to withhold the gratification of my curiosity."

"I will not withhold it entirely, Henneberg. Have you time?"

"The only use I have for my time is to devote it to you."

"Take a more comfortable seat. Here in the arm-chair. You love me."

"Are you at last convinced of this, Augusta?" Henneberg said, again seizing her hand.

"Yes," the baroness replied with a quick, nervous clasp of his. "And you love me as I desire to be loved, patiently, submissively, and without seeking to distress me."

"Unhappily, I must."

"It is, however, a merit in you, and I recognize it from my heart. I feel it as a duty towards you to give you, at last, the key to my conduct! I will do what I have never done before. I will relate to you briefly this book. Then you will understand that I can be to you only a friend, and nothing more, nothing else. The story of my friendless youth you already know, if you have not forgotten what I told you at Hyères."

"I have only forgotten what you bade me forget. Every other word that you said to me, in those fabulous days, I remember."

"Then you know that, in Kreuznach, as a child, I was the petted darling of my parents; then, for years, the nurse and companion in my father's sick-room: and that after his death I was left all alone with an unloving step-mother. Perhaps I was in fault, also,—obstinate and impatient I always was. In a word, we could not get on, and I left home. I came to Paris, with one introduction and a light, oh! a very light purse. For three months I sought in vain a place as teacher. Those twelve weeks I shall never forget."

"Was that your time of torture?"

"Oh, no; I rather like to look back on that time!

I learned much,—for instance, how to live for a whole day on ten centimes!"

"How can one do that?" Henneberg asked, amazed.

"It is quite simple. You buy, with this imposing sum, a pound of stale bread; you eat half of it dry, this is the first meal; you eat the other half crumbled into a kind of tea, this is the second meal. Tea?—You have some twice-drawn tea-leaves, dried a second time; you put them in cold water, and heat this secretly over the flame of the gas-burner on the stairs. This tastes very good, when one is young and very hungry. At that time I also learned to black my own shoes, and to perform all sorts of laundry-work in a little earthen wash-basin. But it is not worth while to relate these things. At the end of three months, I found a place in a boarding-school *au pair*. Do you know what that means?"

"Without salary, is it not?"

"Yes. There is only board and lodging. The lodging was a little bed in a corridor, from which I was expected to superintend, during the night, the dormitory in which slept sixteen young girls; the board consisted chiefly of bread, and the odour of the viands at the pupils' table. But I had no choice when I took this starvation place. I had three francs left, and I was too proud to write home for more. In this school I remained four months. Then I could bear it no longer. I was entirely worn down with over-work and insufficient food. Meanwhile, I had acquired quite a fair knowledge of French, and I ventured to mention this to the Directress. At one of the Teachers' Agencies I had made the acquaintance of a girl employed there, and now, six months later, I ran across her in very different circumstances. She was splendidly well off,—poor thing! She had a fine apartment, and beautiful clothes, and drank champagne every day. She invited me to come and stay with her till I found a place. I was very glad to do it. She was like a sister to me. She gave me dresses, and a good cloak, and she lent me money. I remained with her about two weeks. And I learned much there, also. The poor

girl died before I could repay her. Brandy and disease of the lungs. That is one of my great griefs. She was a gentle, careless little thing,—not able to cope with you men."

The baroness closed her eyes; she remained silent for a few minutes; then she resumed:

"In the next two years I changed my position four times. First, I was in Passy, in a private family. I received fifty francs,—somewhat less than the cook,—and was ostensibly, the teacher of two children. I was really the children's maid, to wash and dress them and take them out walking, and, besides, I had to do some share of the house-work. Still I should have been very content, if I had not been obliged to pay the Agency the whole of my first month's salary. A second month's I did not get. The man of the house soon became impudent towards me. Once he forced an entrance into my room, and only went away when he perceived that I was actually about to jump out of the window. This was the first time; I did not know what else to do: I had not the presence of mind to strangle him, though I could have done it; I was stronger than he. I passed a frightful night. I was mortally ashamed. I asked myself what disreputable thing I had done,—else how could he have dared? You see how absolutely childish my ideas were, at this time. In the morning I went away, without assigning any reason. I had not the courage to complain to the woman of the house. At the Agency I related what had happened to warn them against sending others there. But the man in charge only shrugged his shoulders. He seemed to be used to it. I was not. He sent another girl at once into this den of horror,—a very attractive young girl of a good Oldenberg family. She remained.

"Quite soon, the agent sent me to another place, again, of course, with the commission of a month's salary. This time my employer was an elderly business-man, the proprietor of a large porcelain-shop. For two weeks I was left alone, then he, too, began to annoy me. Now, however, I was wiser. You must

have noticed that I am quick at catching an idea. I perceived what a teacher in all good families must expect ; and as I had no desire to fret myself to death, or lose another month's salary to the agent, I contented myself with paying no attention to my employer's advances, and simply kept out of his way. This appeared to displease him, and he ventured to put his arm around me once. Upon this, I struck him in the face a blow which it's a pleasure to think of now. Two days, later, his wife dismissed me summarily, on the ground that I was untidy.

"About my third place, I have no cause to complain. It was with a family of Peruvians, people about like the Zagals. They had a fine house in the Champs-Élysées, lived as if they were millionaires, gave a dinner party every day,—for which I had to write the menu,—had the wagons of the Louvre, the Bon Marché and the Printemps forever at their door, and never gave me my month's pay till I had dunned them for it six times,—which, after a time, I did not mind doing. They were kind, good people, disorderly to a degree, hot-tempered, noisy ; and I remained with them a year and a half. Then, something went to pieces in Peru ; there was a war, or a revolution ; and the word was : 'we are ruined ; we must leave Paris !' The house was broken up in a day ; the people vanished, and I have never heard of them since ; and, as for me, I was again in the street. But now I was not penniless, I had been able to lay aside something, and this made me arrogant. I became critical, refused some humble offers, and waited contentedly until it was midsummer. Meantime my savings were used up, everybody was leaving Paris, and I was finally glad to accept a place with a family who were going into the country."

The baroness stopped. She drew a long breath, and said with dulled voice : "Henneberg, turn your eyes away from me. Now comes the dreadful chapter of my story. Now comes my journey through hell. Perhaps it is better I should not tell you."

"Please go on," he said gently. "If you must go

through hell, I will do the same. Wherever you are, I want to be."

After a few minutes the baroness went on ; her voice was hard and severe, and sometimes it seemed as if she, as judge and avenger, were reciting over to some wretched criminal the story of the miserable creature's misdoings.

"These people were what is called 'distinguished,' that is to say, canaille who had a title, a house in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and a château in Normandy. The wife was the daughter of a well-known general of the Empire ; and she loved to express her contempt for 'shopmen-officers.' Her way of talking was rough and noisy, real barrack-room talk, with as much swearing as if she were a squadron gone astray. This did not prevent her having an old lover who trembled before her, and whom it is probable she caressed with the dog-whip in her sentimental moments. I mean, literally. The dog-whip was always at hand. The husband had been for a short time in the diplomatic service ; he was now occupied with horses, and with the ballet girls of the Grand Opera.

"This exemplary pair had two children—a boy, at that time nineteen, and a girl of fifteen ; the latter was to be my pupil. This poor girl was really underwitted, and her parents had never taken any interest in her at all. She had been left entirely to the servants, and what they had made of her is simply indescribable. Later on, however, she married well, and she soon learned to lead as gay a life as anybody. The boy——

Again the baroness stopped speaking, leaned back in her chaise-longue, and shut her eyes. After a few moments she once more sat erect and continued her story :

"The boy was as handsome as a Greek god. It would be useless to deny this. Slender, pale, with a calm, classic face—like that statue of the young Bacchus of which one can hardly tell if it represents a youth or a girl—and with passionate, entreating eyes. His voice was singularly gentle and sympathetic, and

when his lips parted and he spoke, it was like a flower opening and exhaling its sweetness."

Henneberg moved uneasily in his chair.

"No retrospective jealousy, my friend!" the baroness said; "you have no cause for such a feeling. Hear me further. Rémy, for this was his name, was indeed beautiful as a Greek god; but his character was hateful as—as nothing which I know on the face of the earth. That fellow made me doubt if there were goodness in the plan of Providence. It was inconceivable, otherwise, how so deep villany could wear so captivating an exterior. Almost from the day of my arrival at the château he attached himself to me. From morning till night I could not shake him off. I began by paying very little attention to him. It could not be possible that I, twenty-four years old—no, I was not quite twenty-four, but nearly that—must be on my guard against this boy of nineteen, who looked even younger than he was. But soon, it was impossible to disregard him; from beseeching looks he came to entreaties, imploring me to love him.

"I now began scrupulously to avoid his presence, or rather, this was my constant endeavour, though it was often unsuccessful. He came to the school-room where I was with his sister; I begged him to leave us alone, but he would not go; and the girl herself, no doubt at his instigation, declared that she could study better when he was there.

"Finally, I complained to the countess, who shrugged her shoulders, called me prudish, and averred that it would do the boy good to share in his sister's lessons. This was quite true. He was both dull and idle. A tutor had been for years endeavouring to fit him for Saint-Cyr, and he was still not ready to try for admittance, although he had nearly reached the limit of age. It was not his intention, however, to profit by any instruction of mine. He sat in the room, indifferent to what was going on, and doing nothing but follow me with pleading eyes, until it became something unendurable and I would turn my back to him.

"His mother, wretched woman, seemed to favour her

son in his pursuit of me ; and later it became clear that she had done so. At table, his seat was next to mine, if there were no company. His room and mine were adjacent, and going out or coming in, I was sure to see him in his doorway, whispering caressing words as I passed, or even stretching out a hand to detain me. Safe in my own room, with the door locked and bolted, I would hear him knocking softly on the partition. In vain I tried to be unconscious of all this ; I could not keep him out of my mind. What could I do ? how escape his pursuit ? An appeal to the countess was useless. I had indeed heard her say once, in conversation with some guest, that a sensible mother should take charge of a son's early amourettes, and see to it that he fell into good hands,—some nice, quiet, respectable person's. That was the very word she used,—‘ respectable ! ’ ”

“ Horrid ! ” murmured Henneberg.

“ I now became extremely unhappy, and many a time I cried half the night. The right thing to have done, of course, would have been to leave the château at once ; but for this I had not the courage. I was so forlorn that I took a wrong step. I appealed to Rémy himself.

“ The next time he attempted to detain me I stood still willingly, and granted him an interview. ‘ What do you mean by pursuing me in this way ? ’ I asked. ‘ I love you,’ he answered, with that voice of his that would go straight to any one's heart. I told him he must put such an idea out of his head at once ; he rejoined that that was impossible, he could not, it was his life. I asked him how he could be so cruel as to make me the object of a dishonourable pursuit. He swore, with every form of flattery and endearment, that he had no other thought than my happiness : that in two years he should be of age and would make me his wife, if I would but listen to him. My brain grew dizzy ; I bade him leave me, but he refused to go,—I had been obliged to admit him into my room, as the only place where he could talk undisturbed,—and it was now only by the use of nerve-shattering violence

that I finally compelled him to go. But I passed a frightful night ; and I could not help being aware that he also was awake, and was seeking, by many little signals, to communicate the fact to me.

"My reason assured me that all this was clear madness ; and yet, through it all, a persuasive voice kept whispering in my heart,—why may it not be true ? This voice took his part, and pleaded for him. And he continued perpetually to dog my footsteps ; in the house, in the park when his sister and I walked to the village or by the river, there was Rémy ever at my side, with flattering, imploring eyes and caressing words.

"One day he came to me, his eyes wet with tears : 'Have you no heart in your breast ?' he said. 'Now that you know I desire to marry you, why do you still avoid me ?' I bade him be silent ; and as I remained inexorable he drew a revolver from his pocket. 'Augusta,' he said, 'if you continue to repulse me I will kill myself, I swear it to you by my mother's life, by my own name, the only things I care for in the world besides you.' He spoke quietly, and the very look of a hero was in his face. I believed he would do as he had said : even after all that I now know, I am still not sure but he was in earnest. I snatched the weapon from his hand. He made no resistance, but said calmly : 'I can find another.' 'I shall go to the countess and tell her all,' I said. 'That you can do,' he replied, 'but it will not change my resolution.' I was distracted. I seemed to see him lying dead before me. How could I endure it ? I ——"

She stopped ; and when she resumed, it was in a different tone.

"I am wrong in seeking to excuse myself. I do not mean to do it. I only mean to tell you my story. There came a time when I ceased to resist. Then followed weeks of an indescribable life. And then—there came a day when I sought Rémy, and said to him, wild with terror : 'What shall we do ?' He looked extremely vexed, and replied : 'How very unlucky ! Well, there is no hurry ; you can stay here

for some time yet, and then we shall all go back to town, and I will find somewhere for you to stay? 'Is that all you have to say to me?' I asked. 'What did you expect me to say?' he replied. 'And do you think I could bear the disgrace?' I said. 'They all talk that way,' he answered; 'you are not the first, and you will not be the last.' Thereupon he ventured to smile. I was desperate. 'Do you say this to the woman who is to be your wife?' I said. 'Oh! perhaps you thought that we should be married at once,' he rejoined. I said no, I knew it could not be at once, but that he must make ready for it, he must go to his mother and tell her all, and gain her consent.

"Upon this Rémy shrugged his shoulders and was about to leave the room, but I prevented him. Then he became angry; but anything was better than his intolerable calmness: 'Yes,' he said, 'did you really think in earnest that I could marry you? How could you be so foolish?' 'But you swore to me that you would,' I answered. 'Oh, well!' he said, 'I had no such idea; and you should not have attached any importance to idle words spoken in a moment of excitement.'

"My hand went involuntarily to my pocket. I had there the revolver which, many weeks before I had taken away from Rémy. I drew it out and it was my first impulse to kill the boy. But, like a flash, came other thoughts. What would happen, if I killed him and avenged my wrongs? There would be a prosecution, imprisonment, disgrace for myself and my dear father's name. I turned the weapon against myself; rapid as was the change of purpose, it gave time for Rémy to strike up my hand. The pistol went off accidentally, and a bullet passed through his arm. It was only a flesh-wound, but it bled and was painful. He screamed and fell at full length upon the floor. I also screamed for help; his sister was the first to hear me and ran in, followed by the maid of the countess; there was such an uproar that Rémy recovered himself; he implored them to keep still, but they wailed the louder; the whole house was alarmed, and the count-

ess herself appeared, the dog-whip, as usual, in her hand.

"She understood the situation at a glance. 'Rémy is wounded!' I cried, scarcely able to speak. 'It is nothing,' he said. The countess ordered her daughter to go to her own room, despatched the maid for bandages and carbolic acid, and bade a servant take a carriage, and drive to Rouen for a surgeon. Then, together, we carried the boy to his room, cut the sleeve from the wounded arm, and examined the injury. Re-assured by the examination, the countess became composed, and she inquired harshly what it all meant. Rémy remained silent. I looked at him imploringly and with hands clasped in entreaty, but he turned away his head. Then the countess, in her rough way, began to get angry, and screamed: 'What is all this? shall I have no answer!' And then, I fell at her feet and told her all."

The baroness ceased speaking, and her face grew very stern and hard. "Yes, Henneberg," she resumed, "I knelt to that woman, then; but she paid for it later, I assure you. She let me remain kneeling, and as she sat, she played with the dog-whip in her hand. Not until she heard the step of the maid returning, did she speak; then she bade me rise, there had been scandal enough made. She assisted the maid to wash the wound and put on a temporary bandage, and then bade me follow her to her own room. When we were alone there, she said: 'How can you be such a fool? I am really surprised. I took you for a reasonable person. To be married! You are fit for a lunatic asylum! Rémy is a child; you are a mature person. You knew what you were doing; he did not know. Look at yourself, and look at him!' I spare you the story of what I felt while she talked. Every word was like a white-hot knife in my heart. 'I have reason to be very angry with you,' she continued; 'you have brought my only son into peril of his life; you have made a scandal in my house; you have given cause for disgraceful talk; I entrusted to you my daughter, and Heaven knows what she thinks of all this.' I attempted

to leave the room, but she held me fast. 'Do not run away,' she continued: 'I mean to do well by you. Let it pass. I will not even inquire which of you is most in fault. If you were in love with my son, a mother should not be too severe. I might say to you—go your ways. But you have persons of rank to deal with. We will do something for you, if you conduct properly.'—This was too much. I interrupted her saying that there was only one thing that could be done for me, and that, I demanded,—that Rémy should make me his wife. 'There is nothing that you can demand, child,' she said. 'You would like to be Countess Rigalle, would you? Otherwise, nothing? A nice, dainty person you are! But let us talk seriously. I will give you friendly, even motherly advice. You will leave the château at once. We will give you for the present a sufficient pension, and when the time comes we will pay your expenses. If the child is likely to be a burden to you we will take charge of it. You will easily find, in your own country, the settlement that an acceptable dowry is sure to bring. You can easily marry, for the men of your country have not our prejudices.'

"This filled the measure of my indignation. I sprang to my feet; I cried: 'You are a wretch!' She also rose. Her face was distorted she grew white about her mouth and called me vile names. I was frantic and lifted my hand against her. She grasped the dog-whip to strike me. I tore it from her hand and struck her sharply across the face."

"Bravo!" cried Henneberg, involuntarily.

"The situation changed, suddenly. The woman screamed as if flayed alive, and seemed about to fall in a fit. I left the salon, and ran to my own room, where I locked myself in, and for a time, really, I was not proud in my demeanour. Meantime the château rang with the shrieks of the countess: I heard frantic ringing of bells and running hither and thither of servants, and slamming of doors, and every moment I expected a storm to break upon me. The revolver still lay on my mantelpiece where I had thrown it

when Rémy fell to the ground; I took it up, resolved to use it if I were threatened with violence. Everything had now become a matter of indifference to me.

"I did not long remain in this fearful uncertainty. I heard a man's step in the corridor and then a knock at my door. I did not stir. The knocking was repeated and then a man's voice said: 'Fräulein, are you there?' I recognized the voice of Rémy's father: 'What do you wish?' I said, 'I beg you to open the door,' he replied: 'I come with no hostile intention.' I opened the door. 'What have you been doing?' were his first words. 'What has the countess done? what has Rémy done?' I said. He shook his head. 'The countess has such an unfortunate temperament!' he said: 'and you really quite forgot yourself! There's no getting over this; you will have to leave the house at once.' I nodded assent. 'Pack your boxes at once,' he said: 'I have no one here just now to send to the station with you; the horses are away; but as soon as they come in, the coachman shall drive you over. When you are ready, go out to the lodge and wait there for him.'

"I had two boxes, of which one was stored in the garret. I mentioned this, and the count promised it should be brought me. After awhile one of the servants brought it, and began talking to me with an offensive familiarity that he had never before manifested;—the countess was well again, he said, but she had a streak across her face like a red ribbon; in the servant's hall, they were all as pleased as the snow-kings; and so on. I bade him leave me; the man looked surprised, made some familiar answer, and went away. It had already come to that; but this was only the beginning.

"When my boxes were packed, I left the room. Passing Rémy's door, I stood a minute. It was my wish to see him again. But I heard whispering and laughing, inside; I was surprised and confused, and went on. Like a criminal, I crept to the gardener's house at the entrance of the park.

"The gardener, his wife, and their eldest daughter,

a girl of seventeen, were together in the room. They already knew what had happened, and the mother said to me : ' It was a pity that you did not shoot him dead, the worthless fellow. He deserves no better, and sooner or later, he will get a bullet through his head.' As I made no answer, the gardener himself said : ' I owe him a token of remembrance ! Two weeks ago I told him he would make acquaintance with my gun, if he didn't stop sneaking round after our Thérèse.' The words smote me like a lash,—two weeks ago ! Thérèse ! My face must have showed what I felt, for the woman spoke up : ' Yes ; were you deaf and dumb, my poor young lady ? Did you not see that he was only amusing himself with you all the time ?'

" And now, things began to be made clear to me ;—an abyss, a sewer opened before my eyes, and I sank irretrievably into hideous filth. Rémy had for months had well-known relations with his mother's *femme de chambre*. The creature was not jealous. She even secretly encouraged his transient affair with me, and this made her own hold upon his fickleness more secure. And to this shameless creature—I had always felt an unaccountable aversion to her—the wretch had narrated everything, by way of mere bragging and gossip,—everything, the most confidential ! Day by day. Hour by hour. It could not be doubted, for the woman herself carried it to the servants' hall, and the gardener's wife told me of individual things,—it was horrible !

" It seemed I had lived all these weeks in a sort of intoxication, unthinking, blinded, surrounded and almost overpowered with tenderness and passion ; and during all this time, the wretch had gathered the maids and lackeys of the château about me, and thrown me to them as a prey. That was simply a thing unfathomable. I have no clear idea what I did. I believe I begged them at last to say no more. Even with these people, who seemed to be sympathetic, I felt like a person set in the stocks with a placard of disgrace hung around my neck.

"It was evening when the count came to the lodge to tell me that the carriage was now at my service. I left the place without turning my head towards the gardener's family. I dared not meet their eyes, and a gesture from the count restrained them from following me out. On the doorstep the count said a few words to me: the surgeon reported Rémy's wound to be of no consequence at all; Rémy himself bore no grudge against me for it. He would have said more but I made some movement of impatience.

" 'I see,' he said, 'that you are still too much excited. This is one reason why I do not invite you to take leave of my daughter before you go. Also, there might be danger of your meeting the countess.' I nodded assent, and entered the carriage, which was waiting at the gates. Here the count again stopped, and placed a sealed letter in my hands. I cast an inquiring glance at him, and perceived a discreet smile on his face. It was to me as if a frightful clang of bells resounded in my ears. I tore the envelope off; within lay folded a five-hundred franc note. I was unable to say a word, except 'Here!' And if he had not instantly taken back the money, I have no idea what I might have been capable of doing. 'Will you not at least accept what you have earned?' he stammered. That made eighty francs. Certainly I would do that, I had a right. I took the four gold pieces which he drew from his pocket after he had put away the banknote, entered the carriage and shut the door without a look at the count.

"What was in my mind as I drove away into the darkness, I will not attempt to describe to you. And, indeed, my own recollection of it is confused. Distinctly I remember only two ideas, which alternately took possession of me. I thought—the coachman is saying to himself that he is driving an abandoned creature, who has been chased out of the château with a dog-whip; and I saw Rémy, swearing to me that if I did not love him he would kill himself, and how he then ran to the servants and his face of a young Greek god became debased to that of a young blackguard of

the Paris streets as, grinning, he narrated to them his scene with the romantic Prussian girl. The pain it caused me——”

“Then you must have loved this vermin?” Henneberg growled.

“Do not ask me,” the baroness said, with a kind of torpor. “I never ask myself. At the station in Rouen, I gave the coachman his *pourboire*. He accepted the five-franc piece with an impudent air which plainly said: ‘You can afford it; everybody knows how you get your money;’ and asked: ‘Any orders for the Château?’ I said there was nothing, and he proceeded to inquire if monsieur le vicomte had my Paris address. I left him without a word and gave directions about my luggage. I had more than an hour to wait for a train, and I thought uninterruptedly, as I waited, whether one would have time to suffer, if one were cut into three pieces by the locomotive of an express. I will tell you an extraordinary thing about that,—for more than a fortnight I had two broad red stripes across me, at which the doctor was greatly surprised. The idea had been very deeply impressed. It was about half past eleven when we arrived in Paris. I was extremely exhausted. That this was, in part, hunger—for I had eaten nothing since noon—I did not notice. I went into the first hotel near the Saint-Lazare station, and was very soon in a heavy sleep, haunted by painful dreams. I was run over by a train myself, or else I saw Rémy and the countess drawn mutilated from under a locomotive. The next morning I was so fatigued, so worn out, that I had not the strength to rise, and it was fully noon before I left my bed. I breakfasted at the Duval at the corner of the rue d’Amsterdam, and there arose before me, grave and distressing, the question: ‘What next?’

“The force of earlier habit drew my steps toward the Louvre. I had been accustomed to go there when I was out of a place and had nothing else to do. It was a dreary day: I remember the date,—it was Wednesday, the 27th of September. It was cold, the



streets were muddy, the sky was black, the air was part fog, part rain. It was weather like to-day's, only more dreary. Is it worth while to live? I repeated to myself, over and over again, as I walked down the avenue de l'Opéra. What will become of me, in my disgrace? How can I find employment? Every one would turn me away. Could I beg? Or should I do as my friend did,—the girl who died? Or, should I go out of the world? That seemed the simplest; and why delay, since that is the only escape? Why suffer longer and endure further disgrace? With these thoughts in my mind I reached the Louvre. I went into the Galleries of Sculpture, and sat down in the room where stands the Venus of Milo. My own disgrace was ever more and more present to my thoughts. A man sat down near me on the bench, and crowded me insolently. And that too! I thought; any fellow out of the streets picks a quarrel with me.

"I left the Louvre and went out by the river. Another man drew near me, and began talking impertinently. I was ready to scream. I cast a glance at this man which caused him to stand perfectly still for a minute, and then suddenly go across the street. I followed the embankment as far as Pont Neuf, then crossed the bridge to the deserted quay in front of the prefecture. I looked at the water perpetually. The Seine was very full and unusually rapid. It was yellow and turbid. It is strangely attractive, and, also, peculiarly tranquillizing, to follow with the eye the whirling motion of a rapid stream. One must have done this in the midst of great mental excitement in order to understand what I mean.

"I fell into a dreamy condition in which my misery grew constantly less acute; on the other hand, the feeling became more and more imperative—I must go down there! Soon I ceased to think of anything else. Only one question remained in my mind: Would the water be cold? Yet it could be scarcely colder than the soaking dampness of the atmosphere. From the first feeling of the water, my clothing would protect me, and before that was wet through, I should be past

all discomfort. Which would be the surer, to go off from a bridge, or, from the bank, at the foot of the wall, and thence very quietly, very gently, to slip into the water? In the darkness of the night, it would be better to swing oneself over the railing of the bridge; but by day, it would attract less notice to go from the shore. Would it be well to wait till night? No one would believe on what trivial grounds such a question may be decided. I said to myself, I am tired; why should I any longer run about the streets aimlessly? and where can I pass the time till night? This convinced me fully. Then, now! I looked around. No one was observing me. I went down the steps quickly, at a point about opposite the apse of Notre Dame, I took a short run and—was in the river. The current seized me, and I was swept away from the bank. The waves went over my head, a heavy sound was in my ears, and, with the need to draw breath, I was compelled to open my mouth. The water rushed in violently, I seemed to be swallowing a whole ocean. I tried to expel it, I tried to cry out, there came a moment of extreme agony and a suffocation, which really was unpleasant, and I died. You are not to laugh because I say this."

"I had no idea of laughing," Henneberg said in a low voice. Indeed his strained features betrayed agonized attention, and nothing else.

"It is foolish to say,—I became senseless, or anything of that kind. What I did was to die. I was dead, and should have remained so had not help arrived. My consciousness had gone away, over the threshold. That is the decisive thing. Whatever else may occur in my life, I have reached the ultimate experience of death. I can also inform others how it feels to die,—at least, through being drowned. It has been said that, at the last moment, one's whole life comes before him in a flash. This is not so. One thinks of many things and very rapidly, but disconnectedly. First I thought, the Morgue is very near; they will not have to carry me far; then, it was very painful to think that I should have to be exposed

there, and I banished the thought. Then, other things came to me, concerning Rémy and what had happened and what would happen if I had lived. Then, would they hear of this in Kreuznach? what would they say? what would my step-mother say? Then, the image of my father came before me,—in uniform, with his Order. Was there a life beyond? how would my father receive me? Would he know what had happened? That was my last distinct thought; then I went beyond."

The baroness touched her bell, and waited silently till the maid came. "Tea!" she called out, and when the portière had dropped, she went on:

"Here ends the story of the life and death of poor Augusta Hausblum. What follows, concerns some one else. When I again opened my eyes, I lay in a cot in the Hôtel Dieu. A house-doctor and a nurse were busied about me. There was an unpleasant smell of ether and I felt very ill. Also I felt very weak in my head and very much confused, and could remember nothing clearly. I wanted to ask many questions, but the doctor bade me be quiet. It appeared to me that he had spoken harshly. This grieved me, and I began to cry. The tears had an uncommon effect. It seemed as if they washed away the clouds from my mind. I became clear and peaceful. The doctor talked to me very kindly, some one brought me a warm drink, and I fell asleep, for it was late in the evening. I did not wake till morning. When the professor came for his morning visit I learned what had occurred. One of the steamboats was passing just at the decisive moment. A workwoman noticed what took place. She gave the alarm, the boat was stopped, and I was sought for with a boat-hook. It appears that I was not found at the moment. At last, however, my mantle was caught and also completely torn to rags, which, by the way, caused me great trouble when I left the hospital. The boat brought me in to the nearest life-saving station where, after half an hour's work, they restored me once more to life. I ask myself whether so much labour was well expended. As soon as I

began to breathe again, I was carried to the Hôtel Dieu, and there, after about an hour, I recovered consciousness.

"The professor and the students who accompanied him seemed to interest themselves in my case. At first there were but few, for it was still vacation. But later they became very numerous, and that was extremely tiresome. The professor related to them my story, and said that I had evidently made a previous attempt at suicide, for I had thrown myself under the wheels of a carriage. When I denied this, he asked me how I came to have these red lines running across my body, and then I became aware of them for the first time myself. He would not, for a long time, believe that this was simply the result of an idea, but later he published an account of it. It was my wish to leave the Hôtel Dieu that day, but I was urged to remain twenty-four hours, and the following day it was evident that my deadly river-bath had other results. And so, cruel death was not entirely deprived of its prey. 'Now you are free from your trouble,' the nurse said to me, after the doctor had gone. She meant kindly, the rough, good-hearted creature. But I seemed to myself a murderess."

The servant came in with the tea, placed it on a small stand beside the baroness, and at a nod from her turned on the flameless lamp; then he went silently away. She poured tea into one of the two cups of the Sevres tête-à-tête set, and passed it to Henneberg, and then, for herself, in the other. Then, while she stirred the sugar, she continued:

"One day early in October, I was surprised by seeing the count enter the ward. My heart stood still; then, it began beating with great violence. I had but one anxiety—had Rémy come with his father? I was soon reassured on this point. The count approached my cot, looked at me silently, and extended his hand. I did not take it.

"'How could you—' he began. I was not disposed to listen, either to a sermon or to an attempt at con-

solation, and I interrupted him. 'How did you know?' I said.

"He told me they had read it in the papers. It had been in the papers, then! This caused me great distress. I asked to see the notice. At first he refused, but I induced him to show it to me. Fortunately a mistake in the name had been made—Fräulein Namblune, instead of Hausblum. No one would think of me, in seeing this copied into the German papers. In other respects, the story was correctly told—a German teacher, twenty-three years old, and so on, as the police had found it in my certificate of naturalization which I had with me. I asked the count if Rémy knew. The count replied, certainly, and that Rémy would have come with him, but was at the moment going through his examination for Saint-Cyr. 'So!' I answered, 'that is certainly more important.'

"There grew in my mind an inexpressible hatred for the whole gang. These murderers were perfectly tranquil after they had slain their victim. What cared they, if a poor girl drowned herself, whom they had driven to despair! And should I quietly and resignedly accept my fate at the hands of such people? No. By no means, and never! It should be paid back to them, all of it! I was an angry corpse, who would seek revenge for being killed. It is well for the living that the dead generally do not return; for if one does come back, one has unpleasant feelings towards those who have done one harm. The count, poor man, evidently had no idea of what was passing through my mind. He was benevolent, impressive, making the most of his opportunity, caressing, with fatherly demeanour which something in his looks all the time showed me to be a lie. I endured this silently, and mentally added it to his score. After some idle talk, he rose to go, promised to come again, and asked if there were anything he could do for me. There was something he could do. It was grotesque. In the tragedies of poverty there are always contrasts of harlequin-faces. At the time of my rescue some one plundered the dead body. If the trifle of money

fell to any of those who took so much trouble with me, they are most welcome to it. It is not agreeable to worry over a drowned person. Brr!"

The baroness shook herself violently, finished her cup of tea, and poured out another.

"However, I was without a sou. Besides this, I had to remember that the charge for my room was still running up in the hotel; when I left the hospital I should owe a heap of money, and the proprietor would undoubtedly detain my luggage! I begged the count to go to the hotel to give up the room and to have my things stored, there or elsewhere, till I should come out. Then I told him that I had lost my money. He lost no time in placing himself at my service, and I quietly accepted his offers. One week before I had received offers of the same kind as if they had been the bite of red-hot iron. But Augusta Hausblum was dead, and the now living person felt differently.

"The count came twice again to see me; he was more and more devoted and protecting; he required my promise that I would let him know where I was, after I had left the hospital. This was in the middle of October. I was now no longer the proud and brave Augusta who seemed so self-reliant that other girls unconsciously sought her protection. I was pale, and still very feeble.

"It happened to be at that time exceedingly fine weather. The sun shone warm in a blue sky like May. That probably was decisive as to my life. If I had come out into rain and darkness and cold and wind, I should not have had the courage to take up the struggle again. I could go without my mantle and not feel the lack of it. Naturally I went first to the hotel. There I found a bill for a week's lodging; and for the storing of my trunks in a corner of an attic, two francs a day was charged. The whole bill amounted to eighty-seven francs. I had not yet a fifth part of this frightful sum. There was nothing to do but to remain for the present in this den of thieves. How should I now begin? The future looked black.

But I positively shut my my eyes to that, and left it to the care of Heaven. The present was my only thought. I began with an idea of going to the teachers' agency again, or to some girl of my acquaintance, or even of looking up our old, new friends, the Koppels. But this idea I quickly relinquished. No further connection with the past. Henceforth, a new life, with new people. Only one exception I would make, and this in respect to my friend, the *déclassé* who had taken me to her home in '80. I still owed her money. Probably it was for that reason that I thought of her. I went to the place where she lived, but she was no longer there. The poor girl was dead. This gave me a slight shock. But I would not yield to it. She had lived in the rue Byron. In returning home, I went through the Champs-Élysées. It was about three o'clock, and the splendid afternoon had lured all Paris into the open air. I mean the Paris that keeps its carriage. In six lines, the coupés were rolling by; many of them were open, and the ladies who sat in them seemed like jewels in a jewel-box: I went to the edge of the sidewalk, in my brown woolen gown, with a summer-jacket and a very shabby hat, and old, worn *Suède* gloves, and stood looking at these ladies as they passed. What went through my mind at that time, you will learn better by document. I will read to you what I wrote that night in my journal. On the right page."

The baroness opened the volume, turned its pages with fingers so rapid as to endanger tearing the page, and having found the desired place, she began to read:

"These be-rouged and tricked-out women display their airs and graces with a naïve insolence which is absolutely regardless of the pain caused to others. I have laboured and economized. I have humbled myself and striven hard. What have these done, that they sit in their carriages like queens, and besmirch my miserable clothes with the mud that spatters up from under the rubber-tires of their laudaus? Whence have they the wealth that raises their lives above the common level? They did not earn it themselves. Per-

haps not one of them could maintain herself, as I have done, now these three years. What would become of these be-ribboned and be-tinselled images, if they should be thrown one day upon their own strength and capability? Everything that they have comes to them from some man,—a father, a husband, a lover,—always from a man. Am not I also a woman? Which of them is handsomer, younger, more vivacious than I? I believe, vanity aside,—not one. And I also know, I have had the opportunity to experience, that I am not less attractive to men than they are. But what has man done for me? He has hunted me down, has caused me misery and disgrace, has given me anxious days and sleepless nights, he has prevented me from earning my bread honestly, he has caused me to loathe humanity, and he has driven me to my death. Why does he lie at the feet of these women, while he sets his foot upon my neck? Why is he their slave, and my torturer? Why does womanhood bring to these an endless feast in gilded palaces, and to me, shame and the grave? It seems to be because I am stupid, stupid, stupid,—stupid enough to be whipped! But I will become sensible. Now I know that Nature has given me power, as she has given it to you, and if, earlier, it has been turned against me, for the future, it shall work for me. Man has not scrupled to do me harm, I will retaliate. I have been long enough a neuter working-bee in the great hive; I will now be like them, a queen-bee, and the drones shall labour and die for *me*."

For the first time in an hour Henneberg smiled faintly, and observed: "Your picture is not perfectly true; the drones do not work; they are as carefully fed as the queen-bee herself."

"I will not defend my prose," the baroness said, as she closed the book. "With my present taste I find it, besides, rather over-strained. But I know it is the trustworthy expression of what I at that time felt and thought. This book did me invaluable service in those days. I could not see a hand's breadth before me. I was at my wit's end. I had no plan and no vision of the future. At the same time, I was full to

overflowing of all the evil feelings that can seethe in a human soul, of anger, envy, and covetousness. And I had no one to whom I could pour out my heart. It was to me a real consolation to talk to my journal. I spent almost the whole day in my room, pen in hand, and I wrote as if for wages. I detect in myself a literary streak, which becomes well-marked in critical moments. In those days I used to think about writing a novel—my own story, of course."

"What a pity that you did not do it!" Henneberg said.

"Oh, no! A woman is much wiser to live a novel, than to write one. And if I had very great talent, do you think that editors and publishers would greet me as they do now, if they have the honour to be allowed to greet me at all? As the world is organized, man has the key to all successes, and to get equal with man, a woman truly has no need to write a novel. Our irresistible weapon against man is our personality,—not a pen! A woman—at least, a young and pretty woman—who proposes to write herself into position and prosperity, appears to me like a bird, who, with infinite trouble, wades through muddy ditches and climbs high walls, to get inside a fortified position, when all that is necessary is simply to fly in. *Ach!* my poor Henneberg, it is lucky for you men that most women, as we are brought up, have no idea of their power or any thought of using it, otherwise, you would, all of you, lie helpless at our feet."

"We do lie helpless at your feet," Henneberg rejoined, "and just in that consists our happiness."

"That is gallantry, not truth. But let this pass; I want to go on with my story. On the third day after I had left the hospital, the count came to my hotel. 'You have not written to me,' he said, reproachfully. 'You have found me, however,' I rejoined. 'You expected that I should search for you, then?' he said. This seemed to me presuming, and I made no answer. He looked around the room. 'You have no fire?' he said. 'It is not cold,' I replied; but, in truth, I should have been glad of a little warmth. 'It is not very

pleasant here,' he remarked. 'Much pleasanter here than in the hospital, or in the river,' I rejoined. 'Always bitter, always excited!' he murmured, shaking his head; 'how very resentful the German character is!' To this opinion in ethnology I had no reply to make.

"There followed a few minutes silence, and then the count said, hesitatingly, and, as it seemed to me, watching the effect of his words: 'Have you any idea what brought me to Paris to-day?' I expected he would mention some errand, but it was more important than I thought. 'I came to ship off Rémy at noon from the Montparnasse station to Brest.' I am certain that I did not change colour in the least. It did not even occur to me to ask if his son had wished to see me. My indifference was evidently a great relief to the count, and no longer embarrassed, he went on: 'The idle fellow, of course, could not pass his examinations. That's the end of Saint Cyr for him. He has always some nonsense in his head. Now it was the gardener's daughter. Her father threatened to kill Rémy, and it took a large sum to buy him off. Then we determined to put him into the marines; and it is to be hoped that will be a good school for him. He needs it. Do I give you pain in speaking of the good-for-nothing boy?' 'Not at all,' I said; and this was perfectly true. All that Augusta Hausblum had felt, lay buried under the Seine. And, to end the subject of Rémy, I will say, that a year later, he made the Tonkin campaign with distinction, and in the spring of '84 was about to receive promotion and become an officer, when he had a quarrel with a subaltern in the foreign legion, of course, on account of an affair with some woman; they fought, and Rémy was shot through the body, and died a few weeks later. His end was what one might have expected. He was too handsome and too wicked. And now, never again a word about him!

"The count watched me narrowly after making this communication, and then he said, in a voice as coaxing as he could make it: 'You will not visit the sins of the

son upon the father, I trust?' I replied coldly that everyone was answerable for himself alone. He drew nearer, took my hand, and became sentimental. 'Ah!' he said, 'if you would allow me to atone for the boy's transgression!' That appeared to me a creditable impulse,—the first which I had ever observed in this family. I was still singularly innocent, in spite of all I had passed through. As I did not offer any objection, he believed himself understood, and went on to explain the situation. He was in distressful circumstances. A ballet-dancer whom he had loaded with benefits, had just now been snatched from him by an airy Neapolitan prince. Snake that she was! Ungrateful wretch! He had obtained an engagement for her at the Grand Opera, to him she owed all her successes. Without him she would have been ere this in a pauper's grave in Montmartre; and now she had treated him in this scandalous way. I must not trifle with him. He had need of friendship and kindness. The disorder in his married life, which he felt keenly, would render existence unendurable to him, if he could not have one heart to help him forget his misfortunes. I had been extremely attractive to him from the first, but he had felt that I was unapproachable. Now, he ventured—"

"For shame!" Henneberg exclaimed.

"Wait," the baroness said, in her severest tone, "save your contempt for what is to follow. I consented. Yes! I told you before that I should lead you through depths unfathomable. If you have had enough, you can go."

"Go on," Henneberg said, almost inaudibly.

"I will have pity and be brief. For this reason, I would not give you my book to read. The same day I took possession of a human habitation, and I bought a winter cloak. But I still keep the old garment, torn by the boat-hook. It is my *fetisch*. From time to time I open the shrine and perform my devotions before it. It has saved me from many things. It and my journal—would you like to see it?"

"Oh, no ! Please not !" Henneberg exclaimed, with a gesture of repulsion.

"That is true ; I ought not to be cruel ; indeed, you have not deserved it. I will go on. After a week, during which I was very busy, I was able to settle down into a home. Now, for the first time, I was housed like a respectable woman—I do not mean to jest—I had my own carriage, I learned for the first time in my life to know that comfort which doubtless contents the body, however the soul may complain. As I have said, Augusta Hausblum ceased to live. I was another person and must have another name. I took the name under which you first knew me. I called myself Countess Rigalle. I felt that it was mine by right. Rémy's oath had given it to me. Also, it was the beginning of my revenge upon the countess, who had not thought me good enough to bear her name. One feels an indescribable self-contempt in taking a name for the purpose of disgracing it. I know this by experience. And the count was shocked at first, but he had to bring himself to it. He was my house-dog. He was my chattel.

"The countess learned very soon what had happened. For I took care to have my name very soon in the papers, as present at concerts and first performances at fashionable theatres. And now began a battle between this woman and myself which made life endurable to me, and the count, interesting. For he was the prize, and my whole personality was staked. I had no hatred for the count ; I was angry with him only because, on his account, I had to loathe myself. But I was resolved the countess should feel my power. You have no idea what a victory over a strong and unrelenting foe means, when one is in a state of humiliation. It gives you back your self-esteem in a degree."

Henneberg thought silently that this depended altogether upon the means employed in the struggle, but he did not allow himself to say it.

"At first the count's wife made violent scenes, and threatened him with dog-whip and revolver. The only result of this was that he fled, and remained all the

time with me. Then she sent her lover to endeavour to intimidate me. The conversation that took place would be really worth reading to an audience. But I spare you. The poor man was very glad to get into the street again. Then came a notary from the countess to offer me money in her name. I derided him. 'I am much richer than your employer,' I said, 'and she will soon have to beg me for support.' I happened to know that she had married according to a law which limited her rights over the count's property, and that her own income scarcely sufficed to pay her tailors' bills. The next thing was that she applied to the police to send me out of the country, of course on the charge of being a Prussian spy. This was a dangerous attack. The count was a Legitimist and without influence in the Republic. The countess had inherited from her father important military friends. Why I did not seek protection from our embassy, you will understand. I sent word to her, through her notary, that if I left France, the count would accompany me, and would take out papers of naturalization in some foreign land in order to obtain a divorce from her, and make me his wife. Very likely she did not believe this. She did not cease.

"Then I was driven to self-defence. I was obliged to go to the Secretary. I was obliged to sink one circle deeper in this Inferno. After that nothing could be done to harm me. And the adventure taught me, at least, that I could do whatever I wished, if insult and stain did not cause me suffering. The countess became aware that she could do nothing more against me. She would have been glad to get me out of the way by the hand of an assassin, but, for sensational things like that, the Paris of to-day is no convenient field.

"Then I caused the town house in Faubourg Saint-Honoré and the estate in Normandy to be sold, so that the countess was literally without a roof over her head. She replied by an attempt to have the count put under guardianship. We had, however, been able to gain possession of some uncommonly expressive

letters which had passed between herself and her admirer,—I mean to say, to be exact, letters of his, on which, however, she had written comments in her own hand. I informed her that these letters would be read aloud in court, in case she really brought suit for the appointment of a guardian. Upon this, she ceased. Then I followed with the final blow. I gave her the choice, either to carry on the war longer, in which case, I would destroy her reputation and deprive her entirely of support; or, to keep the peace, and the dowry of my former pupil should be paid in full, and she herself should receive a suitable income. Upon this, she accepted her defeat, and allowed herself to be maintained. Every month she took as a gift from me, a thousand francs. And so, my humiliation at her feet was paid back to her in full.

“Two years the count lived at my side. Then he died. Perhaps his life was shortened by all that had happened, but he never wished it otherwise. He often said to me that he had never before known what happiness was. After his death, it suddenly again grew dark around me. To the girl I paid her dowry, five hundred thousand francs. This was promised. To the countess I secured twelve thousand francs a year by an annuity. This cost about one hundred and thirty thousand francs. Scarcely anything was left for me. I had only my house, my stable, and my jewels; I sold everything,—at a disadvantage, of course,—I should have an income of about twenty thousand francs. But that would be no life for me. Augusta Hausblum was fortunate if she could earn seven hundred francs a year. The Countess Rigalle was appalled at the prospect of having no more than twenty thousand francs income. I had had time, you see, to develop all my natural inclinations. I could no longer content myself in a condition of mediocrity. An average existence was to me impossible, for I knew well enough what it meant. I have had my dinner at the Duvals, and I know the sounds one hears and the sights one sees; I have been in a crowded omnibus, and I know what one smells. I have lodged in poor



little hotels and had my sleep stolen from me night after night, with people running about overhead. A thousand times sooner die, than suffer these vexations again. It is not arrogance, it is simply the knowledge of bodily discomforts that makes me say, I must belong to the privileged class."

"Do not apologize for yourself," Henneberg said, "I feel precisely as you do!"

"In a monarchy, I should like to be a queen or princess, that the police might protect me from unpleasant contiguity. For people are dreadful, when they are under no restraint. They cannot move without being an annoyance to their neighbours. In a republic, money is your sufficient protector. But there must be a great deal of money: so that I can see a play without being martyred by some woman near me, nibbling bonbons; so that I can hear a symphony without being driven wild by neighbours beating time with their feet and singing with the music; so that I can make a journey to Nice without being put out of temper by the inconsiderateness and ill-manners of my fellow-travellers. All this I took fully into the account at that time. Insane ideas passed through my mind. I thought of entering a convent; there I should have found peace and silence. But I did not want to deceive myself, and it seemed to me probable that I should not be received, if the truth were known."

"A penitent with twenty thousand francs income is always welcome," Henneberg interposed.

"You are a heathen! Do not speak against my religion. Then my thoughts grew constantly more sombre, and soon I found myself facing the question whether it would not be the simplest thing for the Countess Rigalle to follow in the steps of Augusta Hausblum. In any case, not by way of the Seine. For, thence, one returns. That I had already experienced. Various humiliations came at this time, embittering me beyond expression. The whole circle of the count's friends presented themselves as ready to inherit what he had left. I forgot to tell you that the

count had introduced me to all his friends. They conducted themselves with all courtesy and respect. In my salon and at my table, the tone was far higher than in the house of the count's wife, you may take your oath. Scarcely, however, was the count dead, when, as if in concert, the brutes showed themselves. These men were all old, or at least, of mature age; they were mostly married and fathers of families; and they offered me their hearts—every man of them! Their hearts, only—even those who were bachelors. They left me no comforting self-deception as to my position. They showed me plainly what they thought of me. I experienced an inexpressible loathing of them, of myself, of everything. In this situation, you made my acquaintance. Do you remember how it happened?"

"As if it were yesterday! It was at the autumnal flower-show in the rue de Grenelle. You were with the old baron d'Estoille, who presented me to you."

"Yes, Estoille was one of the count's friends; and, of course, an aspirant."

"That whited sepulchre!"

"Any man thought himself good enough for me. You were the first person from my own country that I had met for years. You were respectful, reserved in your homage——"

"Why do you bring forward these dignified reasons? I should not be angry with you if you were to say that something in your heart was touched——"

"Very well. I allowed you, then, to visit me, and two weeks later, I consented to go with you to the Riviera. So much you know, yourself. But what you do not know, I will now tell you. To me, this journey was a last mad act which I allowed myself, a closing scene before the curtain fell. You had with you, day after day, a person under sentence of death. Each of our merry little suppers was a criminal's last meal before execution. Every morning I might have offered to you the gladiator's salute to Cæsar. This is not a figure of speech, dear friend; all this is the steely truth. But in the calm of that perfumed landscape, in



the presence of that blue sea—perhaps, also,” she said in a low voice, as if reflecting and speaking to herself, without a glance at Henneberg, “perhaps, also, under the warmth of your affection, by degrees the love of life came back to me again. At twenty-five one is so thoughtless! The countess Rigalle died in Hyères, and I buried her without any regret. A new existence dawned. But this new existence I would have supremely respectable. At the very bottom of my heart, I am a little home-bred Philistine who loves to make preserves and, sad to tell, would enjoy a kaffee-klatsch at the Frau Councillor’s.”

“You traduce yourself.”

• “No. I assure you this is not the least imaginary. I am perfectly conscious that I remain always German, provincial, home-loving, and domestic in my tastes, notwithstanding my mental emancipation, notwithstanding I read philosophy aloud to my father, four hours a day, for four years. And so it came about that I asked you if you would make me your wife. You were not willing to do this. Don’t say anything! You were not willing, and to all appearances you were right. For the moral rule is different for a man and a woman. He is permitted to have a past. She is not. And a woman may appear to him worthy of a passionate devotion, who still is not worthy to be his wife. I say all this, dear friend, without anger or blame. Agostini, meanwhile, one of the count’s friends, came, during this absence of mine, to the conclusion that he could not live without me. He wrote. He offered me his hand. Now, for once, nothing said about the heart! His hand. I longed inexpressibly for tranquillity and the conventionalities. I will not deny that your refusal had hurt me a little. And so I left you suddenly——”

“I was like one stunned and could not understand what had happened.”

“Now, you understand. I wrote to the baron to meet me in Nice. There the bargain was at once concluded. Yes, it was a business transaction, and we have both kept to it in good faith like respectable

people. I broke with the whole circle of the count's friends, lived for the next few months in the deepest seclusion, and married the baron in the spring. Then, for the first time, I allowed you to see me again, and I do you the justice to say that you accepted the situation like a sensible man, and never sought to embarrass me with questions."

Henneberg sighed deeply.

"Since that time, I am living my third life. The baroness Agostini looks upon the graves of Augusta Hausblum and of the Countess Rigalle, and has nothing in common with either of these unfortunate persons. I am an example of the transmigration of souls. Do not think it cynicism that I have related to you the story of a ruined girl and of an abandoned woman. These experiences are absolutely foreign to my present self. I have preserved the recollection of them, but without the accompanying feelings—much as one remembers a past headache. But I have this to say, my equanimity is absolutely suspended upon one condition—I must not repeat the acts of the teacher and of the countess. It gives me great peace of mind to say: the Baroness Agostini is an honest woman; since her marriage she has had no history, as is the law for honest women."

"No history; only a legend," Henneberg remarked.

"Yes, I know that. There are myths current about me. I have heard some of them. They amuse me. I am said to be the daughter of a famous general. I am said to have been kidnapped by a painter."

"As I heard, it was a musician."

"So? That version I had not heard. Then, the painter deserted me, it is said; I attempted to drown myself, Agostini plunged into the water after me; out of gratitude I became his mistress, by degrees he made over to me all his money, and finally married me, to get his millions back again. Do you know anything more than that?"

"It is not worth while to repeat the gossip of the clubs. Besides, I have never allowed any talk about you in my presence."

"It really does me no hurt. People may gossip behind my back. They have the right. And now, dear friend, you know me as no other person on earth does. How you may think of me hereafter——"

Henneberg interrupted her:

"To know all is to forgive all," he said.

The baroness rose. "'To forgive?'" she said. "You should not have used that word. Where I do not forgive myself, another's forgiveness is of no help to me; and where I feel that there is nothing to forgive, the forgiveness of others is needless. No. I would say this: now you understand how correct my life must be in this third incarnation of mine, if I am not to perish of my own self-loathing."

The baroness rose from her seat and linked her fingers together behind the heavy masses of her dark hair. "Have I caused you pain?" she said softly.

"Now and then," he replied thoughtfully.

"Then pardon me. To myself it has been a great relief. It has helped me to get over the death of my poor lory. And I feel as if we could now remain good friends—better friends than before."

"That is not a satisfaction to me."

"You must make it so. Otherwise you will lose it. And I should be sorry—very, very sorry."

"If you really cared for me——"

"Go no further. I do care for you. It is the last woman's feeling that I have left. Everything else in me is dead. And because I care for you, everything must remain as it is. What gives me power over you? What binds you to me?"

"My love."

"Let us be more accurate. It is your unsatisfied longing for me, which a memory rekindles. Were it gratified, the spell would be broken."

Henneberg would have interrupted her.

"I know man's nature too well," she said. "Here is my text-book. The pages on the left."

Henneberg also rose. He went up to the baroness, and looked straight into her eyes. "Anything will do for me," he said; "I am your slave. But promise me,

at least this : give me a formal promise. I know you will keep your word."

"What?"

"Baron Agostini is near the seventies. He is perhaps older than that. When he dies, will you be my wife?"

"How brutal you are!" the baroness exclaimed.

"Only frank, as you are. Now you know what I want, and what I hope for."

For a few minutes the baroness was silent, and thoughtful. Then she said: "No. Not even then. You desire to be master. I dread being subjugated. We are both egoists. A lasting relation between us is only possible when the tie that unites us is a tranquil affection. Not a devouring one, on the side of either. Henneberg, sometimes it seems to me as if we were both something like two great tigers or panthers. Two such creatures might be much attached to each other and very friendly. But in the very depths of their souls, they must have a certain distrust of each other. They know themselves too well not to recognize, each in the other, the same dangerous feline nature."

It was now dark. As the baroness still stood by the fire-place, and showed no intention of sitting down again, Henneberg inquired: "Have you seen enough of me? Am I to go, now?"

"Something occurs to me," said the baroness. "I should like to go to see our old Klein. Is it not a long time since you have seen him?"

"I must acknowledge it. Our new enterprise has occupied me so much within the last three months, that I have not found a minute for him since I came back from the sea-shore."

"It is a sin to neglect the old man like that. Come. Let us go to see him now. And so I shall get the air; I have not been out of doors all day." She touched the knob, and the maid appeared, and stood in the doorway with her submissive mien.

"I will be ready directly. Will you wait a moment, please, in the salon?" the baroness said. Henneberg



kissed the hand which she extended to him and went into the little salon, while the baroness gave her orders to the maid. As the latter passed through the adjacent room on her way to communicate to the coachman and the lackeys the commands given her, she passed purposely near Henneberg :

"*Dieu merci !*" she whispered, "the storm is past. Monsieur le baron can always work miracles with madame la baronne." Henneberg made a very slight gesture with his hand, but neither by word nor look took notice of the woman's compliment.

The baroness did not keep him waiting long. She appeared in a dark and scrupulously plain street-dress. Under the black lace hat and contrasted with the black boa, her face looked extremely pale. This was perhaps due to the long time spent in the hot-house atmosphere of the curtained boudoir. Perhaps also, it was a result of the excitement of this last hour. For although she averred that she no longer suffered in the sufferings of Augusta Hausblum and the fictitious Countess Rigalle, and that both these persons were both dead and buried, it was evident that their tombs were not so tightly sealed but that their ghosts could walk abroad. Her voice, her look, had shown plainly enough that in this transmigration of souls a very large share of character belonging to the two earlier lives had passed over into the present re-incarnation.

In the house of the baroness a very strict etiquette was required on the conduct of the servants. When, with Henneberg at her side, she went out to her carriage, the maid followed her through the boudoir and the two salons as far as the ante-chamber ; thence the steward attended her down the stairs and out to the carriage-door, while the lackeys stood at intervals from the upper landing to the foot of the staircase. These lackeys stood like statues, but behind the backs of the baroness and Henneberg, their impudent grins avenged the respectful immobility of their persons.

CHAPTER VI.

A VISIT TO DR. KLEIN.

DR. KLEIN, whose address in the rue Raynouard Henneberg gave to the steward, as the latter closed the carriage-door, was an extraordinary old Suabian, whom the freakish gulf-stream of destiny had swept away from his native land to Paris. He had begun by making a special study of the ancient languages and of protestant theology, and had been a foundation-lecturer at Tübingen; later, he had made a change, and devoted himself to theoretic astronomy. This was an unprofitable employment in Germany at that time. There were only a few places in universities and observatories, to which a man who had made choice of this vocation could aspire, and Klein possessed none of those traits of character whereby a man gets the better of his rivals in competition for the favour of patrons in high positions. As lecturer he endured for several years an existence of the greatest privation. To the three or four young men who attended his courses he remitted their fees, as a rule; and he lived on self-denial, dreams, and a few private lessons. Then it happened that, in the year 1856, he sent to the Paris Academy a paper upon the period and orbit of a supposed lost comet which excited the interest of Leverrier, at that time director of the Paris Observatory. The great astronomer inquired of Klein about his circumstances, and encouraged him to seek prosperity in France.

Klein hesitated not one day, but came straight to Paris, where Leverrier was indeed able to employ him, though only transiently, as calculator in the Bureau of Longitude. Klein was at that time thirty-four years of age. He felt himself at the summit of his wishes. He believed himself extraordinarily fortunate, and the letters which he wrote home at that time betrayed a kind of superstitious anxiety, lest his

prosperity was too great to be lasting. He worked silently and industriously; he rolled in wealth, with the one hundred and fifty or two hundred francs monthly which he earned; desired neither compliments nor promotion; and was therefore prized and passed over, by the authorities. He was, however, on the point of being advanced to a permanent position when the war broke out. He had been naturalised and therefore was not sent out of the country; but, after the fall of the Empire, when Leverrier was abruptly turned out of the Observatory, Klein had to go also,—the protégé, with the protector. Again times were hard for him; but God forsakes no Suabian, even though turned into a Frenchman. Klein found a position as tutor in a family, which, for the next three years, made him secure.

In 1873, when Leverrier returned to the observatory, he remembered Klein, and again gave him employment, but still not a permanent position. The next year, Klein reached the fabulous noonday height of his earthly career; he was appointed to the French South Sea Expedition for observing the transit of Venus; and on the return of the expedition he received as his individual task the mathematical working up of the results of the observation. It was a fatiguing task, from which no fame and little stimulus could be derived, requiring constant attention while, at the same time, it was an almost mechanical work. But it furnished regular employment for many years, and a slender—though to him amply sufficient—compensation, and it gave him the satisfaction of feeling that he was useful in his humble department of science.

Over his equations and logarithms his life passed along, and he was scarcely conscious that he had become an old man, whose only outlook was the Dark Gate, from whose threshold no travellers return.

Henneberg had made his acquaintance on first coming to Paris, and while still in some degree occupied with his scientific pursuits. A professor of mathematics had referred him to Klein for some purpose, and since their first interview, which had a professional

motive, Henneberg never again lost sight of the Suabian, being strangely attracted by his unworldly simplicity of nature and remarkable intuitions. On account of those unusual characteristics, Henneberg had formed the wish to introduce him to the Baroness Agostini, who greatly prized the unusual when it appeared in unpretending forms. But Klein was by no means to be persuaded to visit her, and the baroness had to condescend to go to him, in his hermit's cell.

Klein had developed an extraordinary view of the world. He denied with unwavering firmness the theory of human progress. He opposed it on mathematical grounds. The cosmos is eternal, progress is a movement in time; every movement or development which we call progress, must forever have attained its goal, however remote and lofty this goal may seem to us to be. In nature there is only an endless chain of motions. What seems to be development is only periodic revolution from the end to the renewed beginning and again to the renewed end. The phenomena of the solar system are a type of this. One year follows another, one year resembles another, the clock-work of the world keeps on its even way. If one spoke to him of the Darwinian theory of development, he replied that this theory established only the fact that the hands upon the dial-plate of the universe moved forward with regularity: this dial-plate was very large,—it might be the whole solar system, or even the whole Milky Way system; natural science could survey but a very small part of the dial and a very short period of the movement of the pointers; could an eye embrace more and see for a longer time, it would appear that the hands moved in a circle, and after one completed revolution began another, and so on to all eternity. If you objected that this everlasting beginning over again was a discouraging idea, he would ask smilingly whether one was not glad every winter to look forward to the spring, and whether one had any wish for any different kind of spring from that of preceding years.

Another of his ideas was that thoughts are waves of ether, like heat, electricity, and light. Their amount in the cosmos is unvarying, like that of all the other forms of force. They are eternally diffused in space like rays of lights or currents of electricity. Upon the human brain strike constantly millions and millions of different kinds of vibrations, representing so many different thoughts, which in all the stars in all the depths of space, just now, or in incalculably remote time, have been thought. If the brain is prepared to receive a given vibration, of a certain duration in time and extent in space, it is thereby stimulated to a corresponding vibration ; and the thought represented by the vibration becomes consciousness in the brain. In the ascending portion of the circle, which we call development, the brain becomes capable of ever shorter and more rapid vibrations ; in the descending portion of the circle, it becomes more compact and inactive. Every invention, every discovery, every extension of knowledge, has its origin in this, that some one brain has attained an excessive vibratory capacity, enabling it to grasp and turn into consciousness the corresponding thought-vibrations impinging upon it out of space. Hence it follows that no thought originates in the head that thinks it ; it has been thought before, an infinite number of times, and will, likewise, be thought again ; each brain acts like a conductor in electrical transmission, it receives a vibration out of the infinite and returns it again to the infinite ; we stand continually on the shore of the whole ocean of possible thoughts, but we become conscious of those only to which our brain is sensitive. Differences in knowledge are differences in the vibratory capacity of the brain ; character, temperament, and talent are the length and duration of the waves. Each human being is a rhythm. Attraction or aversion between men depends on whether their rhythms harmonize or are dissonant,—whether they reinforce or disturb one another. Klein of course, was aware that his system was connected with the most ancient Pythagoreanism, but he had given it many different shapes, and had drawn from it

most surprising consequences, which the Baroness Agostini always continued to think over for days after she had had a long talk with the old mathematician.

The rue Raynouard is a long, narrow, tortuous street in Passy, badly paved, with narrow sidewalks, as dead as a provincial town, and but rarely roused from its repose by the sound of carriage-wheels. It lies on the ridge of ground that follows the left bank of the Seine all across Paris, its highest point being the Trocadéro hill. Behind the houses of the odd-numbered side, the ground falls away with a steep descent to the river bank, and standing on the edge of this declivity, one overlooks a large part of the city, as from the platform of a tower. It is an old street, with old houses, which as a rule, stand far back in large neglected gardens, and are shut in from the world by continuous walls, each having its single, surly, close-barred little doors.

At one of these little doors at the end of a very long, bare, blank wall, the carriage of the baroness stopped. A repeated, loud ringing at the bell by the footman, awakened after a time the grating of a key as it turned in a rusty lock ; the door opened, and an old woman appeared, who began courtesying zealously as soon as she saw the baroness and Henneberg.

"Is monsieur Klein at home?" Henneberg inquired.

"Certainly," the woman answered, "where should you think the dear man would be, at this hour?"

The visitors entered through the little doorway ; on the left was a small building, occupied by the concierge. In front of them lay a wide, dark garden, with a few old trees and an oval grass-plot, and in the background the house was visible. Not a single window showed light. There seemed to be no one within, at this moment. A gravelled walk, which glimmered faintly through the dark, wet turf, led past the house to the left, and through a much larger garden in the rear, to the edge of the declivity, which was topped by a low wall. Against this wall, about midway, a kind of shed

had been built, at whose door the path came to an end.

The concierge had preceded the two visitors, and now knocked at this door. Within, nobody stirred. A little window near the door was dark.

"He cannot have gone to sleep as early as five o'clock?" Henneberg said.

"Oh, no ; but the dear man is not like other people. He does not answer if you knock. You must go in." She courtesied again and went back.

Henneberg opened the unfastened door and entered. Inside was darkness, yet transparent, for the wall opposite the entrance was entirely of glass, and through this great window the never pitch-dark Paris winter night, with its innumerable far-off lights, appeared.

"Who is there?" cried in French a thin, piping voice from a corner.

"Visitors ! Frau Baroness Agostini and Henneberg," replied Henneberg, speaking in German, and came nearer.

A faint cry of alarm was audible. "*Um Gotteswillen !* My most honoured patron, my most gracious Frau Baroness !—I really cannot—I am not at all in a condition."

Henneberg advanced to the corner whence the voice came, while the baroness remained standing in the door-way. Klein was in his bed, but had quickly risen to a sitting posture, and regarded his visitor with alarm.

"You are somewhat indisposed ?" Henneberg said anxiously and extended his hand.

The old man grasped it and held it fast. "No, no," he said, "not at all ! I only lay down to be able to think more quietly. I beg a thousand pardons. Only for a minute ! It is extremely impolite—but if you would leave me for a minute, I shall be dressed directly, and at your service."

"Stay as you are."

"No, no. That cannot be ; that is entirely impossible. I beg—I beg you to excuse me,—but just for a single minute !"

Henneberg returned to the door, and the two stepped out into the dark garden. They had not long to wait, before Klein appeared in the doorway with a small kerosene lamp in his hand and, with bows and apologies, begged them to do him the honour of entering.

- Klein was a very tall, very thin, somewhat bent man, with smooth-shaven face, white hair and blue eyes which looked out, true-hearted as a child's. An unusually projecting chin, a long nose, and a slight elevation of the corners of the mouth gave a certain resemblance to a Punchinello-face. He wore felt shoes, trousers lamentably threadbare at the knees, and a long and, in spite of the haste with which he had dressed, carefully buttoned overcoat of an indeterminate colour,—a grayish yellow on the edges and the seams, and where less worn, an odd shade of gray.

The inside of the shed formed one room, shut in by the slanting roof with its naked rafters. If there had not been a plank floor, it would have seemed like an empty cattle-shed. The furniture was almost more simple than the room. In the right corner, an iron bedstead, over which Klein had hastily thrown a coverlet of large-flowered red chintz; in front of the bed a wooden table on which the kerosene lamp now stood; against the wall on the right a box which had once contained biscuits, and on whose top now lay a heap of dusty books, while its interior, protected from sight by two chintz curtains, nailed firmly to its upper edge, seemed to do service as a wardrobe; and, finally, two chairs, which the old man offered to his guests. He himself at last took a seat on the bed, after Henneberg had declared that he should remain standing also, if Klein persisted in refusing to sit.

"I go to bed early," Klein said with his thin, high-pitched voice, and, still somewhat embarrassed, he rubbed his hands together; "it is so quiet, then, all about me, and I get so warm and comfortable, and thoughts stream in upon me so."

In her heavy sealskin coat and boa, the baroness

was not at all cold. It did not, however, escape her notice that, in the room, there was visible neither a fire nor any kind of arrangement for heating.

"Then I think about everything," Klein went on, and he smiled and still rubbed his hands: "and I enjoy it. But really, I am quite unprepared for such distinguished visitors."

"Do not use that formal word for us," the baroness replied, in the softest tones of her rich, beautiful voice. "We are compatriots and friends, who come to look after our friend and compatriot here."

"You are most kind, most gracious, my honoured patroness. But what I said was quite correct—distinguished visitors. When you enter my poor home, I see right plainly, a star above your beautiful head."

"An astronomer would see stars anywhere," the baroness rejoined, smiling; whereupon the old man, wagging his head, broke out into an approving chuckle.

"How far on are you with your transit of Venus?" Henneberg asked.

Klein's face at once grew serious. An expression of pain came about the corners of his mouth, and he only half smothered a sigh. "I have finished my work," he said, "it was completed two months ago, and has been sent in. A man misses it a good deal when a fifteen years' work comes to its end."

"I should think so! And what are you doing now? For I am sure you are not idle, that would not be like you at all."

"Oh, yes; one must be at work, otherwise he loses his self-respect. I am now occupied with the problem of the three bodies—a most exciting thing!"

"The problem of the three bodies?" the baroness said, surprised, "what does that mean?"

"It is, perhaps, the problem on which the modern drama seems chiefly to turn," Henneberg began. Henneberg got no further with his little joke, for the baroness intimidated him forthwith by a glance. Hers was a romantic nature, and could not endure light-minded jesting.

"I beg you to excuse me," Klein said, with repeated bows to the baroness, "it is rather a dry subject for ladies, somewhat professional. Since Newton, the law is known according to which two bodies attract one another in space. But we do not know what it is when more than two bodies attract in contrary directions, even when only a third body is added. That is what I have to discover." He chuckled again, rubbing his hands.

"Then you have not yet found out?" Henneberg asked.

"Not yet; *ach!* no; not yet. Evidently the right thought-wave has not yet come to my poor brain. There's nothing one can do, my honoured patron; we have to wait till the message comes to us out of space."

Henneberg could not but smile, for the moment; then he began talking mathematics with the old man, while the baroness sat by, silent and thinking of other things. Her woman's thought, busied with the immediate, had framed a definite solicitude which, after a considerable struggle with herself, she succeeded in expressing.

"Pardon me the somewhat indelicate question, Herr Doctor; but, with the conclusion of this long work of yours, would it be the case that—your salary ceased?"

The old man looked shocked, and would not speak.

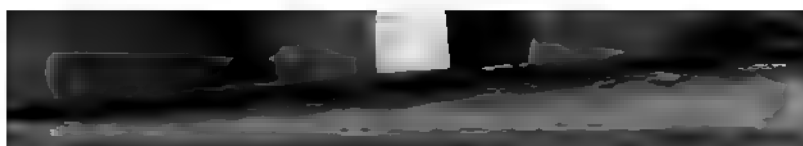
"How is it about that? I beg you to tell us," Henneberg urged gently.

Klein struggled hard for words, and finally, with great hesitation, he was able to say: "Well, certainly—of course, you see—if one does not work, one could not expect to be paid. But something else has already come instead."

"Permit me to ask about it? You must pardon us women for being somewhat inquisitive."

"Certainly, certainly," Klein said; but to make the communication was clearly difficult. "I—I—keep the books for a business man here in this street."

"A business man?" Henneberg said, incredulously.



"Yes, a worthy fellow from Auvergne ; he doesn't know much about reading and writing, but he is very clever. I help him keep his papers in order."

"What business is it?" Henneberg asked.

"Oh! it's—it's a business in fuel and wine."

This paraphrase indicated the little Auvergnat charcoal-seller around the corner.

"Please do not take amiss my inexcusable importunity—how much does this man pay you for what you do for him?"

Klein squirmed like a worm on a hot platter.

"He? oh, he pays—right well, very well, indeed! He's a very equitable man. I have my dinners at his house, and he does not mind giving me money from time to time."

The two visitors exchanged a swift glance.

"Your new occupation leaves you some leisure time, I hope," Henneberg said; "and now I shall venture to ask a favor of you which I have greatly desired for a long time. I want to have a number of my earlier mathematical papers translated into French. Who could do this better than yourself, Herr Doctor? May I count upon your help?"

Klein looked at him narrowly. "Do you really think," he said, "that I should be able——"

"How can you ask? You consent then? It will be a great gratification to me. Allow me to send you the German originals to-morrow morning; you will be doing me a very great service."

"But why should this work be done here?" the baroness said coaxingly. "It is not exactly comfortable here, is it? I have in my house any number of unoccupied rooms. Let yourself be persuaded, dear, kind Herr Doctor; come to our house. I promise you that you shall be completely undisturbed; you shall be entirely free, as much so as if you are here. Let us carry you off now, at once!"

Klein had listened with increasing perplexity, but the rapid flow of the baroness's words could not be interrupted. When she ceased, and smiled upon him with her shining dark eyes, he pulled himself together

at last, and replied, with much distress: "*Ach!* my most gracious, most honoured patroness, that, I cannot do! I beg you most gratefully, Frau Baroness, leave me here as I am. It is always dangerous to attract the notice of very distinguished patrons. It is something I have always feared."

"I would not wish to cause you fear," the baroness said, a little offended.

"Pardon me, my most gracious Frau Baroness; indeed I did not mean that. I would most respectfully say this,—I am an old man, and have my fixed habits, and it is better for me to keep them. At least, I feel so. Here I am, in a certain sense, on my own ground."

"How is that?" Henneberg asked, in much surprise.

"Well, it is quite a story," the old man replied. "This house formerly belonged to the parents of a young man whom, in the early seventies, I prepared for the Polytechnic school. He passed his examination successfully; and, in their gratitude, these noble, kind people wished to do something extra for me. What they offered me, I really could not accept. But I begged them to allow me to occupy this studio. This fine airy room had been built purposely as a studio for my pupil. He had a taste for sculpture,—more than he had for mathematics, in truth! However, he passed! My wish was granted. Later the dear, kind people sold their house, but a clause was inserted in the deed, permitting me the occupancy of this studio for the remainder of my life. It was in due legal form, honoured lady; I am on my own ground here. And if you only knew how beautiful it is!"

"It is perhaps a little bare-looking, here?" the baroness ventured to inquire.

"Bare-looking?" Klein exclaimed, in his highest treble, and got up from his seat on the bed. "It seems so perhaps by night. But by day, with the sun shining in through the glass wall, the place is all golden. In that way, you see, I roll in gold! And then the view! It is really wonderful. Just look for yourself, my honoured patroness. Down below, here, this dark,



misty abyss is the river. And these glow-worms creeping in the darkness are the little steamers. And there the red lights, at regular intervals like carbuncles on an unseen crown,—those are the lamps of the bridge. And over beyond, is the Champ de Mars and the Esplanade des Invalides,—nobody in all Paris has had such a view of the Exposition as I have had. There was always the crowd of people, swarming hither and thither, and a glitter and a sparkle,—and often illuminations and fire-works, and I looked down on it all, in supreme comfort, as from a star. But the evenings here are my great enjoyment. Truly, my honoured lady, I would venture to ask you to honour me with a visit some time at sunset. It is worth the trouble. Sometimes it is all a dull red out to the hills on the edge of the horizon,—a wonderful light, full of presages and predictions. Yes! I see the world then, as it will be, perhaps, in two million years. For, you know, the sun is gradually losing its heat. When it was young, it was white-hot. Now, it is yellow. Later, it will be dark red, before it becomes extinct. Then the aspect of noonday will be like my crimson evenings. Then there will be a quiet, sacred evening-mood over all the earth. Is it not like a dream?"

These last words he had said looking out, with a kind of inspired enthusiasm, and speaking almost as if to himself. Then he turned suddenly and briskly towards his visitors and exclaimed: "And it is as beautiful from my door as from my window. I have trees and grass, and there are blackbirds in these trees who do not forsake me even in the winter. If it were light, I could show them to you, the dear little birds! Their song is the only sound I hear; everything else is silent, there are no noisy, shouting men or whistling boys. I feel like an enchanted prince in a palace. Like a real, enchanted prince, my honoured patrons." And again he chuckled and again rubbed his hands.

"Quiet and a view are indeed two very precious things," the baroness said. "But we seem to require from civilization something more."

"And I have more, most gracious Frau Baroness; I have more," crowed the old man delightedly. "A mattress, and bread, and some books. That's the best that civilization can offer. I mean, for personal comfort. We do not value these things as we ought because we are accustomed to having them. But look at an explorer who returns from the wilderness into civilized life. What pleases him most? A slice of bread—sweet, white, soft bread. Nothing delights him as this does. And this dainty thing I have every day. Bread, my mattress, and my old books! That is wealth, most honoured patrons!"

"But you must at least, feel the need of having new books to read, sometimes," Henneberg said.

"New books?" Klein replied, with a mischievous smile. "That only means old books with new names. And so you might just as well read the old books over again."

The baroness rose. "I see that we can do nothing for you," she said, rather sadly. "Herr Doctor, you are too proud, and you have not friendship enough for us."

The old man's face twitched. He took the extended hand of the baroness, and ventured with his own left hand to stroke it gently.

"You do a great deal for me," he said, "when you honour me with a visit. You fill my room for days after. I say to myself—there sat the beautiful Frau Baroness, there she spoke to me so kindly. I see and hear you. Is not that a great deal, my honoured patroness?"

With a sudden movement, the baroness drew off her glove, and extended her hand to him to kiss. Shyly and lightly, Klein touched it with his lips, but his frank, blue eyes shone delighted. Notwithstanding the demur of his visitors he would not be denied the pleasure of accompanying them, with his kerosene lamp, to the street entrance, where after many and fervent bows, he parted with them.

The baroness and Henneberg were silent as they drove away through the dark, muddy streets. Not a



word was said till they reached the Trocadéro square; then the baroness observed:

"I said not long ago that one needed great wealth to escape the annoyances which the inconsiderateness of others inflicts. But Dr. Klein shows us that the problem can be solved in another way, which also seems to me to be a good one."

"Dear friend," Henneberg replied, "there you touch upon the very ancient conflict between opposite views of life. It is the contest between the Stoics and the Epicureans. Renunciation is, also, a way to contentment, no doubt."

"I cannot call it renunciation," the baroness rejoined, "Dr. Klein has all the beauty of Paris before his eyes, and he does not have to suffer from the contact of the populace."

"No. He is the man in the tower, high above the crowd. He is the muezzin. But the pacha in his palace is unmolested, also. I think I would rather be the pacha than the muezzin."

CHAPTER VII.

KOPPEL'S TEMPTATION.

KOPPEL, at this time, was passing through a peculiarly critical period. Many years ago, while he was pursuing his course in philology, he had glowed with zeal and ambition, and had dreamed of some work of wide scope which should lift him to heights far above the level of grammatical word-grubbing; perhaps a book on Democracy among the Ancients; or on the laws of Solon; or on the Abolition of Debts; or on the Agrarianism of the Gracchi; or on some kindred topic. But he distrusted himself. His will lagged behind his imagination; he delayed the beginning of his work with a thousand excuses—which his judgment failed

to recognise as the mere subterfuges of a reluctance to decide: he assured himself that he was not yet sufficiently master of his subject; he had much yet to learn, to investigate, to seek out; or, some other person had seized upon the very theme which he had in view, and he must wait to see whether the other man's work would not render his own superfluous. Unfavourable occurrences likewise constantly justified the postponement of his plans,—first, the war of 1866, then, his own examinations, then his period of probation at the Gymnasium, and then the war of 1870. In the autumn following that campaign, he had been married, at that time being still very young—only twenty-five—to Käthe, who had come from the country-town where she lived, to stay with an aunt in Berlin for some educational advantages; whom he had met at a friend's house; and with whom he had fallen in love. From that time on, it had been a question of being able to supply the absolute requirements of daily life. For he himself was without means, Käthe had brought him only a small dowry of six thousand thalers, and their marriage was blessed with two children in the first two years. His school work,—to have secured which he at that time considered a great good fortune—he performed zealously. Whatever leisure time remained to him, he occupied industriously with private pupils and with correcting proof of a publication on classic philology, thus eking out his meagre income. His great work, his entrance upon the duties of lecturer, his being called to a Professor's chair in some University—these were now castles in the air which receded perpetually and grew constantly fainter. Adieu the higher career, and fame, and honours! He must accept, instead, his domestic happiness as husband and father. But still he remained unable to content himself with mediocrity and obscurity. His impulse toward action, receiving its direction from this obscure, unconfessed, perhaps even unconscious discontent, threw him into the socialistic movement. He was an adroit and effective talker, and soon obtained notice in the party. Frau Käthe,

with anxiety, beheld him in the rôle of a hero-tenor at public meetings, but she kept this quite to herself. With her natural good sense, made still more acute by her affection for her husband, she perfectly understood that he by his early marriage had sacrificed inclinations and hopes to which his heart had clung; and if he now thought that he had found compensation for that which he had been obliged to give up, she denied herself the right to disturb him by objections, and to be a second time a hindrance in his path. He built a new castle of clouds: he would soon become the editor of an important party-journal, and be made deputy; the Reichstag would be the frame in which his personality could develop itself, his words would fly from the Bodensee to Königsau, and wake response in a million souls,—that was much nobler than, as a Gymnasium-teacher for the rest of his life, to strive to explain the malice and whim of uncertain texts of classic authors. These threads of flattering anticipation, which his mind contentedly went on spinning, were abruptly cut by the events of 1870. He was obliged to give up the position on which his livelihood depended,—to leave Berlin,—to begin the battle of life over again in Paris.

He was still young, when he was weather-driven to the shores of the Seine,—thirty-two years of age. He knew how to reconcile himself to circumstances, when he had not the strength to control them as he wished. Like almost all imaginative persons he chiefly regarded the favourable side of a situation. Hence, he overlooked certain facts, namely, that he, through his voluntary exile, had become a man without a country and without political rights; that his position had become that of a hireling who might at any time be dismissed; that the removal had made a big hole in Frau Käthe's dowry, the family treasure, kept until now intact against a rainy day. He stubbornly devoted himself to an observation of all the agreeable things which he had been able to discover in his change of place. "We are on our wedding journey," he used to say to Frau Käthe in the early days; "we must love each other and see Paris." Later he found another

thing to say : " When the richest people in both hemispheres wish to give themselves a special pleasure, they come to Paris. We do the same, without being millionaires." As the years went on, the tides and undercurrents of his mind, the unrest, the alternations of hope and discouragement, became constantly less ; his mental horizon grew narrower, almost without his being aware of the fact. He occupied himself with his day's work, and scarcely sought to look beyond it. His ambition was to become indispensable to Herr Wolzen, the proprietor of the German private school ; his hope, to replace the private lessons, as fast as they ceased, by others, equally or more profitable. In his peaceful home with his mother, his wife and his merry little children about him, he found so rich and soothing a contentment that he really felt no need of anything beyond and forgot his early longing for distant goals.

But, recently, there had sprung up by degrees in his narrow existence as the bread-winner of a family, an anxiety altogether peculiar. He began to concern himself about the future. The son of an acquaintance, a book-keeper in a German commission-house, had reached his twentieth year. The choice, must be made for military service in Germany or in France. The family, after painful struggles, decided for France ; for, said the father, in language, school-education, and habits, the boy is French ; he will have to make his way in the world here ; it would needlessly create difficulties for him, if, for a year, he wore the German uniform. Koppel, with this case before his eyes, was forced to consider the parallel situation of his own children. What was to be their destiny ? In tastes and opinions they must, of necessity be French ; this they breathed in, with the very air, in Paris ; this floated in from the streets, it crept in from intercourse however limited with others ; all the German patriotism of the parents could not ward off. And yet, at the same time, the children were only foreigners in France ; and while this was not of very great importance in Elsa's case, it was for Oscar a formidable

handicap in the race of life. Koppel had not been able to acquire property for his children. What right had he to make their disadvantages still greater? With what justice take from them those aids in the struggle which a young man finds in the relations with others which his parents have established,—in his own membership of a great national community,—in having had the same school education and the same training for a career that others have had? Koppel felt painfully his responsibility. He reproached himself with having neglected his duty towards his children.

Oscar was now sixteen, and it was fully time to send him to school in Germany, if there were to be offered to the boy any possibility of casting in his lot as a German with the other young Germans of his generation. To give up for the children's sake his position in Paris and return to Germany on an uncertainty, the father did not feel it would be possible for him to do. Should he send Oscar to Germany alone? This would be hard for the parents as well as for the boy, and would be also a burden as regards expense which he scarcely felt able to bear.

In the midst of these anxieties happened the disappearance of his mother, which threw into vivid light his sad isolation, and brought to his mind with extraordinary clearness how entirely a foreigner he had still remained through all these years in Paris. And though the adventure seemed to have had no injurious effect upon the old lady's health, she had, however, not shaken off the impression of that dreadful day. She never spoke directly of the incident, but she began to complain frequently (which hitherto she had not done) that she longed for Berlin; she tearfully remembered old acquaintances whom she should never see again; she sighed that it was hard that her poor old bones must lie in Parisian ground. Her silent grief touched him the more, because heretofore she had always been the bravest in the house, and had never in his moments of sadness added to his discouragement by so much as a sigh or a depressed look.

Henneberg's re-appearance within his range of vision had added materially to his discontent with himself and his circumstances. It actually shocked him to find himself so frequently thinking of his friend and of his friend's condition. Could it be that he was envious of Henneberg? No; of so base a feeling he knew himself to be incapable. But it was impossible not to make comparisons. How shabby his rooms appeared to him, when he came home from his friend's splendid apartment! How contemptible his green-rep chairs, his engravings on the wall, his three-groschen bust of Schiller! He suffered continuously from the humiliation of being obliged to recognise how unskillfully he had shaped his fortunes. For his wife, for his children, he had provided only the narrowest kind of existence. For his mother he could not even procure the last gratification of passing her few remaining days in the place to which her heart inclined her. His own life he was wasting in a soulless routine, and dared no longer think of the ideals of his youth. Henneberg, on the contrary, moved, brilliant and successful, along the heights of the great city's life. Perhaps he was not making a morally noble use of his wealth! Perhaps he was sunken somewhat too deep in selfish luxury and worldliness! But what freedom! What mastery over all external things! What gratification of all inclinations as well towards good objects as towards those less praiseworthy! And from what a beginning had he risen to this lordly existence!

Koppel himself had grown up in very narrow circumstances; in his father's house, anxiety was always present at bed and board, and he had early learned how strict frugality can bring every copper to its utmost usefulness. But his own lot had always seemed to him a very delightful one in comparison with Henneberg's, as he had learned to know it in Berlin from the latter's own account.

Ludwig Henneberg had a romantic family history. His mother was a von Milowitz, the daughter of a not very prosperous but very supercilious country gentleman in Brandenburg and of a former lady of honour.

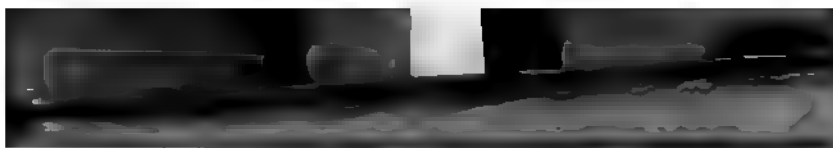
to Queen Elizabeth, who, in pride of birth could even give many points to her husband. In Potsdam, where the Milowitz family passed part of the year, the daughter of the house fell in love with the clerk of a circulating library from which she obtained her mental food, and married, after a frightful domestic storm, the man of her choice. The parents cast off their degenerate daughter, and made it a point with the owner of the library that he should dismiss his clerk. The young couple went to Berlin, and there Ludwig was born. Henneberg's father must have been an altogether incapable person, and very feeble in character, and that he should be able to inspire a well-born, well-educated girl with an absolutely reckless passion is one of those riddles of love which the female heart not infrequently offers for solution. He had neither inventiveness nor enterprise, and he understood nothing beyond handing books over a counter with smiles and flattering speeches. He was not grateful to his wife for having rent her family-ties, and given up her home and her social position, that she might go with him ; on the contrary—as cowardly, base natures frequently do, in similar cases—he felt a grudge toward her, in his inmost heart, on account of her love, which at first had flattered his vanity and impelled him to take an unreasonable step, but was really the original cause of an aggravation and embarrassment of his position. His pay as clerk in a shop was not sufficient to support a family, even when the wife was as humble and unassuming as his ; and instead of making any effort to get on in the world, he merely, one day, deserted his wife and child ; and like a thorough scoundrel, escaped to America, where he was said to have died from habits of intemperance.

Frau Henneberg was left alone with her two-year-old boy. She was absolutely without means, and had neither a trade nor a profession, for the education of a young lady of rank in those days did not aim at making her capable of earning a living. In the three years of her marriage she had learned just this—to ask nothing and to expect nothing from life—to en-

dure everything—to suffer hunger and cold—to do the work of a servant, and to hold every coin fast with desperate clutch. When the wretch who had ruined her existence had deserted her, she sought in her despair to obtain the forgiveness of her own people. But her parents would not receive her; they allowed her first letter to remain unanswered, and the second was returned to her, with the words “not accepted,” in her father’s handwriting, on the envelope. Upon this, Frau Henneberg gave up her parents, as they had given her up; and, unaided, began the battle with poverty.

The incidents of this battle were heart-breaking. Her destitution at times reached depths in which the tragic elements almost shaded into the grotesque. For instance, she could not afford to pay for even the humblest kind of a lodging. If she were to have a roof over her head, it appeared that she must either beg or accept the city’s help. Then it happened that a goat, which her landlord in the Potsdamerstrasse had kept to supply milk for his youngest child, was sold, being no longer needed, and its stall became empty. The animal had been kept in a kind of shed which had been made by boarding in the front of the triangular space under the landing of the stairs. The landlord gave the use of this little place to the forsaken wife, and here the boy spent his early years. He would often tell, later, what a part this goat’s stall played in his childish dreams,—how he often fancied that he was a goat himself, and with what fabulous beings his fancy peopled the inaccessible corner where the sloping roof met the floor at an acute angle.

Frau Henneberg did embroidery for a large white-goods establishment, and earned at this work (in which she became very skilful) about two dollars a week. She herself, lived on chichory coffee, black bread, and potatoes; for her Ludwig, however, she contrived to provide rolls, sausage, and beer. Her clothes were so old, so mended, that when it was possible, she went out only at dusk to avoid being seen; but her Ludwig was always decently clad, and on the



street he would have been taken for the son of well-to-do, middle-class people. In the house lived a clergyman, who interested himself greatly for the mother and son, and in the depths of winter came to her assistance, notwithstanding all her efforts to prevent this. This excellent man invited Ludwig frequently, and his sons became intimate with the boy; he discovered that Ludwig had talent, and procured for him scholarships, thus enabling him to attend the gymnasium, and later, the University. From his fifteenth year, Henneberg was able to lift part of the burden from his mother's shoulders. She exchanged the goat's stall for a little bedroom, which was divided in two by a chintz curtain, and also had a stove, a thing, of course, not thought of when they lived in the shed under the stairs. Frau Henneberg learned again how to cook by a real fire, instead of a spirit-lamp; but she had become so thoroughly accustomed to doing without meat, that to the end of her life she never returned to the use of it. The slight improvement in her circumstances, which to others still seemed extremely narrow, but to her were a step upward from the lowest level of want, came too late for the poor woman. Fourteen years had made her gray, half blind, a martyr to rheumatism, and finally, the victim of pulmonary disease; and when she had experienced the happiness of seeing her son a doctor, she died—scarcely forty-six years old—in his arms, on that July day, 1871, when the victorious army, after the conclusion of peace, marched through shouting Berlin.

Such had been Henneberg's early life, as he himself was wont to narrate it. And now he drove through the streets of Paris in his luxurious carriage, with his thoroughbred horses; he dwelt as master in rooms whose splendour surpassed that of many a royal palace; he splashed with idle hand in a deep and apparently inexhaustible stream of gold! And how had Henneberg gained this fabulous victory over the hostile powers of life? Through great intellectual achievements which another man could not hope to imitate? By no means. Koppel had no desire indiscreetly to

overestimate himself, or wrongfully to depreciate Henneberg, but he said to himself that he was not in mental ability, inferior to his friend. The other's advantage over him had consisted in being able to grasp resolutely when the floating hair of the goddess Fortune for the first time came within the reach of his hand. To himself, chance had not as yet been propitious. Was this because he had never yet stretched out a hand?

About this time, shortly before his renewed intercourse with Henneberg, Koppel—or rather his wife—had received an unexpected legacy. Frau Käthe's eldest brother, a widower and childless, had died, and the surviving sister and a younger, married brother, a manufacturer of chemicals in Brandenburg, had shared the property, Frau Käthe receiving 40,000 marks; so that the Koppels, with what was left of the wife's dowry, and with some savings from recent rather more prosperous years, at the present time possessed in all about 60,000 marks.

This sum appeared to Koppel quite a respectable property, before he met Henneberg. A feeling of security came over him that he had never before known. Now he was safe in case anything should suddenly interrupt his work; his family were sheltered from want, and he was free to plan for a considerable outlay in the interest of the children's future. From the moment, however, that Henneberg re-appeared, Koppel began to regard his treasures from a different point of view. What was seventy-five thousand francs? Considered by itself, scarcely better than nothing. In the perfectly safe bonds in which he had been advised to invest, at the French-Oriental bank where his legacy had been paid him, this money brought in twenty-two hundred francs interest. That certainly ought not to be despised, but it altered nothing in his life. He remained a hireling, dependent on his place, bound fast to Paris. He, however, dreamed of freedom, of release from the fetter of a profession which he regarded as disagreeable, because it implied to him stagnation. His desire for a higher

and broader destiny awakened from its prolonged slumber and began to stir with torturing throes. His self-reproaches at his own inability to make the way smooth for his mother and for his children, became more frequent and more severe. Was it really impossible to rise above the humble condition in which, hitherto, his destiny had idly developed itself? Was not this legacy the finger which good luck held out to him, to which he, for his part, must resolutely cling? As a finality, his 75,000 francs were very little, almost nothing. But as a means?

Koppel had known for years a certain Pfister, the younger brother of a banker from Mannheim who, although married to a Frenchwoman, was giving his son a German education in Wolzen's school. This Pfister, as a young man of considerable fortune, had come to Paris, late in the seventies, to enter upon stock-jobbing, but chiefly, however, to amuse himself. For a time he made great gains, and went on with overweening arrogance. In the disaster of the *Union générale* he lost, however, his entire property and a good deal more. His brother, who, as head of a respectable banking-house, had to take into account the business honour of the name, arranged his affairs—that is to say, he came to an agreement with the creditors, paying them as little as he could, and declared, also, that he would not do this a second time. Pfister's splendid establishment, his carriage and saddle horses, were all seized; he took an apartment in a woman's house, let his spare rooms to young men, learned to go on foot or in an omnibus, and got his meals for a franc and a quarter in restaurants *à prix fixe*. From the Bourse, however, he did not break away. Any man who has once fallen under its spell can never get free, it appears. No longer able to speculate on his own account, he became a "*remisier*." This name is applied to a kind of go-between or touter, who instigates speculators to give him orders, and, when he is successful, makes them over either to the recognized or the tolerated dealers at the Bourse,—the *agents de change*, or the *confiseurs*. The work of the *remisier* is neither

needful nor useful. At most, it only saves the speculator the trouble of personally giving his order to the broker. For this intermediary action between the customer and the broker, the *remisier* receives, from the *agent de change* a third, and from the *coulissier* a half of their commission.

In the dull years which followed the downfall of the *Union générale*, Pfister was obliged to develop great activity, in order to live. No man whom he ever had known, or with whom he had ever exchanged a word, was safe from him. He was always coming to men's houses at the most unsuitable hours, preferably early in the morning or late at night, he could not be rebuffed, and loaded them down with advice about speculations at the Bourse. He had often thus visited Koppel, to whom the pushing fellow was a torment. For his brother's sake, Koppel would not actually show him the door, but gave him distinctly to understand that his visits were not welcome. The *remisier* appeared to him the most unprincipled and objectionable embodiment of financial sycophancy; and whenever the stout, uncouth man with the heavy cheeks, the puffed eyelids, the fashionable, pointed beard, the short, bulbous nose, and the eyes, now crafty, now blinking, behind the shell *pince-nez*, appeared before him, it was his conviction that work-houses had as inmates many tramps and beggars far less idle than this Pfister. Their conversation was almost always after this type.

"Well, Herr Doctor, will you never do anything? Have you not some little commission for me?"

"You know I never speculate."

"That's just the trouble, Herr Doctor. Everybody speculates here in Paris and does well at it. If I could name to you my customers—"

"And, besides, I have not the means. I don't know why you take me for a capitalist."

"That is what you pretend, Herr Doctor. But you cash coupons at my brother's. And if you really have not large means it is nobody's fault but your own."

If you would give me a few commissions you would end by being a rich man."

"It appears to me that men grow poor rather than rich at the Bourse."

"Yes, when a man is a fool, he does. But you mustn't strike in blindly. I have trustworthy information about Spanish Bonds. They will rise five points in a very short time. A perfectly safe transaction. You are your own enemy if you don't buy some. There's no need of going into it very deeply all at once."

Pfiester always had this "trustworthy information." He was in the secrets of all the great houses. When Rothschild bought and when he sold, Pfiester knew it. He announced approaching fluctuations in this or that security. He estimated exactly the year's earnings of the great Companies. Each time that Koppel took the trouble to verify (for a joke) Pfiester's predictions, the result always gave them the lie. What happened would be the exact contrary of what Pfiester had foretold, except it were something of public notoriety, where the price of the securities was not at all liable to fluctuation. This did not disturb Pfiester's self-conceit in the slightest degree however; and he continued, as before, to peddle out his "trustworthy information," with a serious and confidential air.

In the winter after the Exposition, Pfiester urged Koppel more zealously than ever to try his luck at the Bourse. He may have had the feeling that Koppel's refusal was a little less unhesitating, a little less abrupt, than before, for he came more and more frequently to the house. In truth, Koppel saw him with less reluctance. His presence harmonized fairly with the train of thought which at that time possessed Koppel's mind. He allowed himself to talk at some length with Pfiester, which he had never before been willing to do. Pfiester was in his element. He set forth, in a brilliant picture, the political and business situation of the two worlds. He explained the economic position of the different nations, the outlook as to war and peace, the trade with Japan, horse-railways in Smyrna,

the guano exportation of Chili. He was indiscreet with diplomatic secrets, and announced important steps about to be taken by the foreign office. He had all names and figures at his fingers' ends.

In the everyday material of talk, he was especially fluent. A man by the name of Miller, whom Koppel knew, had just cleared forty thousand francs as a result of having taken Pfister's advice as to Italian bonds. One Schulze had "operated" so successfully in Turkish bonds that, quite recently, he had made his cool million. The beautiful house which Herr Meyer had lately built in the Champs-Élysées testified in stone to the owner's successes at the Bourse in past years. The outlook was exactly at this moment more favourable than it had been before, within the memory of man. The only thing now was, not to delay. Whoever, at once, took advantage of the current, would infallibly come out a rich man. And the flood of Pfister's eloquence ended in the usual way; he drew out his note-book and pencil, and he said: "Take my advice, Herr Doctor, buy Portuguese bonds. That is the most extraordinarily promising thing at this moment."

The tempter's words made an impression upon Koppel. They kept him busy. His long established critical attitude towards all this empty talk changed; he no longer bore in mind that Pfister, with all his confident promises about making his customers millionaires, had been himself ruined at the Bourse; he failed to take account of little remarks which Pfister inconsiderately let drop, now and then. Once the *remisier* said that a customer was causing him much trouble because his securities had made a sharp drop; another time, he complained that a customer for whom he had made a great deal of money was now "out of it," and one could not "operate" with him any further; one day he showed Koppel a ring, saying: "Look here, Herr Doctor, this ring cost me twenty-two thousand francs."

"How was that?"

"A man had great luck on my advice. Out of grati-

tude, he gave me this ring. Soon after, he ran away, owing forty-four thousand francs, and I had to pay half of it."

These incidents did not, however, serve as a warning. Koppel reflected only on what was told him about successful operators, who appeared to his mind as all enjoying a Henneberg's existence. In him awakened and grew the impulse to try once for himself. Carefully, of course; reasonably, without risking anything. He seriously imagined that this was possible. When, however, he had reached the decision to undertake something, he suddenly, for the first time, became aware that he actually *knew* nothing about the Bourse and its methods of procedure, and had only very confused notions on the subject. His idea of speculating was, to buy securities at a low price, and sell them at a high one. His judgment told him that the profits could be large only when large blocks were bought and sold. But how it could be done? This making large purchases with little money was to him altogether mysterious.

The next time Pfister spun about him the endless web of talk, Koppel said, with some hesitation: "If Calabrian Railways are really so sure to rise, I should like very well to make a small purchase; but in order to have the ready money, I must first sell my own securities, and that is so much trouble to do."

Pfister looked at him with amazement. "Why?" he said.

"Why not? How else could I pay for the Calabrians?"

Pfister broke into discourteous laughter. "Good for you, Herr Doctor!" he cried, "Good for you! Pardon my frankness, but there is nothing in the world to equal a German *savant*, in being impractical! Who has any idea of paying for Calabrians? If a man is going to pay for what he buys, there would be no use for the Bourse. Any money-changer at a street-corner would do for that." Tone and manner expressed the deepest contempt, as he spoke.

"To buy and not to pay—I don't understand," Koppel said.

"That's what happens," Pfister explained, amiably coming down to the level of his auditor, "when a man wastes his life with the old classics, instead of looking about him a little in the present. I would venture to say, Herr Doctor, that here in this house, from the butcher in the street-shop to the servants under the roof, every man knows the difference between purchasing securities, and operating at the Bourse."

"I am sorry," Koppel said, "to be less enlightened than the butcher and the servants." But his desire for enlightenment had so blunted his feeling of personal dignity, that he was not at all angry at Pfister's impertinence.

"No offence meant, Herr Doctor! Now let me explain to you: from securities that you buy and lay aside, you earn nothing; and securities from which something is to be earned, you do not lay aside. I would never recommend, for instance, that you should purchase Calabrians as an investment; they are something you buy to get rid of, not to keep."

How it could be advisable to buy something for the purpose of getting rid of it, when you were under no necessity of buying it at all, was not very clear to Koppel. He did not, however, linger upon this point as he had other questions to ask.

"Whether you keep a thing or do not keep it has nothing to do with what I asked you—how can a man buy and not pay? Of course, I see one could remain in debt. But why should I expect any one to lend me money?"

"You do not borrow money, and nobody lends it. All you have to do is to give me an order, and it is fulfilled. You have no occasion to take any further trouble."

Koppel, astonished, shook his head. "How extraordinarily convenient," he said. "Any man can come to you and say, 'Buy me Calabrians'; and you do it?"

"You are not 'any man,' Herr Doctor. You are a

man of means and position. I know you, my brother knows you —"

"Your brother? What has he to do with it?"

"My orders are fulfilled through him."

"That I should not agree to, in any case," Koppel said, quickly.

"I understand," Pfister rejoined, with equal haste; "a man very often does not care to have his acquaintances know about his affairs. I operate through other houses also. As you please about that."

The protest had been made involuntarily. Koppel was conscious of feeling ashamed of what he was about to do. It was an act to be done secretly, avoiding the eyes of those who knew him. But he did not see, or would not see, that this was distinctly a warning. After brief reflection, he remarked: "I understand it now. Your house pays for me and gives me credit until I sell. Then I get the profit; or else I have to pocket the loss."

"No fear of that," interposed Pfister smiling.

"That's all very fine. But I become very dependent upon your house, it seems to me. Suppose they were suddenly to cease giving me credit any longer. Then I should have to sell at any price, and it might be at a great loss."

"Why should they, so long as you meet your liabilities?" Pfister asked, with a sympathizing amazement at Koppel's childish ignorance.

Koppel had no definite idea as to the meaning of this word "liabilities." It slipped by, unconsidered.

"However, if a man gives security——"

"That is not required. In ten years' experience, I have never known of such a thing. And even if one house should refuse credit, we have only to transfer your account to another house. There are sixty *agents de change*, and about a hundred *coulissiers*, who have no other object than to do just this business."

Koppel was tranquillized. "Then I will try it for once. You may buy for me—" and he made a rapid mental calculation, "thirty Calabrians."

Pfister had already, with an air of triumph, drawn

out his note-book. As he put his pencil in order, he said :

"Thirty isn't a right number, Herr Doctor ; it must be either twenty-five or fifty. A transaction at the Bourse is always in blocks of twenty-five."

"How is that ? I have lately bought, among other things, forty shares in the City of Paris loan."

"That was money down. On credit, it's different. Shall we say, then—"

"Well, if it must be so, fifty."

"Why so anxious?" Pfister said insinuatingly ; "you'd be safe in buying a hundred. It is no risk at all. And I'll tell you another thing, Herr Doctor," he added suddenly, as if he had had a lucky thought, "to be perfectly safe, you might hedge, by a reverse operation."

"What do you mean by that ?"

"You buy a hundred Calabrians, and at the same time you sell a hundred Sicilians, which are at this moment very high. That they will go higher is improbable. If the market breaks and everything goes down, you will gain on your Sicilians what you lose on your Calabrians. If the market remains firm, you'll be happy about your Calabrians, and what little loss there may be on the Sicilians is a kind of insurance money."

Koppel was conquered, and agreed to everything. But when he had, in binding form, given the order to buy a hundred shares that he could not pay for, and to sell a hundred which he did not possess, then began to be disturbed, if not his conscience, at least his common sense, and he desired to know something further about these securities in which he was beginning to deal. But it at once appeared that Pfister, who was capable of interminable talk about people and sums of money, really knew about the Calabrian and Sicilian railways only the fact that they were in Italy ; but had no idea of their length, their original cost or current expenses, what amount of stock and bonds they had issued, or what profits they had to divide. Koppel's manner showed dissatisfaction. Pfister, however,

said cheerfully: "Don't worry your head needlessly, Herr Doctor; all that is of no importance whatever. The quotations and the tendency of the market are all that concerns us."

This conversation took place on a Sunday morning. During the remainder of the day Koppel was somewhat nervous and absent-minded. He could not distract his thoughts from the order that he had given. He was impatient to know whether it could be executed. It vexed him that the Bourse was closed on Sundays and that his suspense would have to last till the next evening. At the same time, however, he felt a certain self-satisfaction. It appeared to him he had done rather a brave thing. He had given an order for a transaction at the Bourse! He had made a venture! He was no longer slavishly submissive to the caprices of fate, but had manfully dared to challenge it to single combat. At the table, he regarded his wife and children with renewed affection and a little secret mischief. "You dear creatures!" he thought, "if I could tell you what I am doing for you! You shall not always live here in the dark in these courtyard rooms! You shall have a good deal more daylight by and by! You will open your eyes wide, when you know for the first time how I am doing my duty by you! You will cry, but with joy!"

Koppel had some difficulty that night about going to sleep; he kept waking up every now and then; he rose earlier than usual in the morning, and was almost feverish. In his classes, his attention wandered. He lost himself in dreaming, whenever for a moment he relaxed his self-control. He could scarcely wait till the afternoon lessons were over. From school, he went straight to the Odéon, where he was accustomed, at the stall of a dealer, to buy one newspaper and glance over the others. The early evening papers, which were already there, only gave the opening prices of the Bourse. The Calabrians were to be bought at 301.25, for, as Pfister had explained to Koppel, when the latter proposed to limit his order at three hundred francs, it is not well

to fix a round sum for that purpose, as prices are rarely in round numbers. The first sales, however, according to the paper, were at 305, which was a disappointment to Koppel, and made him regret that he had not given Pfister more discretion. In the later sales of the day, the price, however, might have fluctuated. He cut a private lesson, in order to await at the Odéon the later *Temps*, which would give the last quotations at the Bourse. He snatched the paper from the dealer's hand and unfolded it with a throbbing heart—right! The lowest price had been 301.25 and the final sales had been made at three hundred and five francs. Koppel did not notice the lateness of the hour, and went home in a pleasing excitement. On the way, he revelled in the thought, that, after the broker's fee had been paid, he would still have made over two hundred francs; and with bold generalization he assured himself that if, every day at the Bourse, he should make even such a modest little sum as that, in one short year his property would have doubled itself, and he would be, if not opulent, at least on the way to opulence.

He was much disappointed not to receive the expected letter from the broker when the postman came for the last time that evening. "How very slow they are in business matters here in Paris!" he said to himself. But when in the morning, there was still no letter, he became quite angry and expressed with decision, in a note to Pfister, his surprise at such negligence.

In the evening he found Pfister awaiting him when he came home.

"We are not negligent," he said, "we have not yet bought."

"What!" exclaimed Koppel, "and yesterday Calabrians were 301.25."

"That's nothing," Pfister answered, smiling. "When the market is unsettled, it is often impossible to do anything. We should have a right to complain only if the price had gone below our figures. This did not happen during the day."

"Well, if that is so——" Koppel said.

"Certainly it is so," Pfister affirmed, and again he smiled. What he did not tell Koppel, was this—that the Calabrians were, in fact, bought at 301.25, but immediately sold again at 303.75, and that he himself pocketed the profit; also, that this was his invariable practice when the fluctuations of the market, at any one session, gave him the opportunity to use his customers' orders for his own advantage. He went away with the promise that he would keep a sharp look-out and snatch a favourable market—a promise which he was not at all in a position to fulfill since he could do nothing himself but give the order to a broker, and await the other's action.

"What does that gentleman want of you?" Frau Käthe asked, when Pfister had gone, and Koppel, who had accompanied him to the stairs, returned into the parlour.

Koppel was at a loss. His first thought was to invent something. But to tell a direct falsehood like that was impossible for him. It would have been the first time, in all his dealings with his wife. He said, after a slight hesitation, and with artistic indifference: "Oh, nothing. He is going to buy a few bonds for me at the Bourse."

"With what money?"

"I am selling some of our mortgages."

"Those which we bought a few months ago?"

"I have found a more advantageous investment."

"So? Well, you know about it. But be careful; it is so easy to be cheated."

"You may be sure I have made inquiries, and that I am not doing it blindly."

"Have you asked Henneberg's advice? He must understand about such things."

"I had no need to do that," Koppel answered, somewhat curtly, so that Frau Käthe looked up from her sewing in surprise. This little conversation with his wife had the result of sending him back into his own room, where he quickly wrote a few lines to Pfister, desiring him in future to address business letters to the

school, rue Vaugirard ; and if there were need of personal interviews, to come to see him there.

He did this on the impulse of the moment, without clearly considering his motive. Up to this time there had never been a secret between himself and his wife. Each was perfectly at liberty to read any letter that the other received or wrote. Why should he, for the first time, wish to conceal something from her ? He did not acknowledge to himself that it was because he could not defend his intended action in her presence, because he was about to do something foolish, dangerous, and wrong ; but he persuaded himself to believe that he was keeping the secret from his wife in order to save her from impatient and excited expectation, and to give her the joy of a surprise, as soon as the affairs were completed, and he could show her their results.

Within the next four days he received three letters, which, in printed forms, made known that one hundred Calabrians had been purchased on his account at 301.25, and that Sicilians, twenty-five at one time, and seventy-five at another, had been sold at seven hundred and forty francs. The Calabrian transaction had been made through one house, the Sicilian through another. The following week the month ended ; accounts were adjusted, and Koppel received a notice (also printed) that his Sicilians had been carried forward at seven hundred and forty-five francs *plus* one franc twenty ; and that he had 575.90 to pay. From the other house he received notice that his Calabrians were carried forward at 310.80.

Koppel was much excited. What could it mean ? that he had five hundred and seventy-five francs, ninety centimes to pay ? To whom ? For what cause ? This was an intended swindle which he would not endure. He at once wrote a post-card to Pfister and desired that "this mistake" of the agent's should be cleared up. Pfister appeared in the afternoon at the school-house ; Koppel showed him the letter. Pfister glanced at it and said :

"That's all right. I don't see any mistake."

"But you told me the agents took only one-tenth per cent."

"Quite true."

"Then I have seventy-four francs to pay, and not 575.90!"

"You don't notice 'the difference.'"

"What do you mean by 'the difference'?"

Pfiester again smiled, with his profoundly sympathetic air. "You bought for seven hundred and forty francs, the market value is now seven hundred and forty-five francs, which is plainly a 'difference' of five francs on a share."

"Well?"

"This difference, of course, you have to make good; add to this the seventy-four francs commission, and the one, ninety stamps; and it's even to a hair."

"I thought the difference of value would be made right when the affair was ended."

"No, Herr Doctor. That is regulated twice a month. But it's of no consequence. What you pay to-morrow, you will get back in two weeks, and something over, we hope."

"They pay this back, then?"

"Of course they do."

Koppel drew a long breath. "Then on my Calabrians I get——"

Pfiester looked at the other notification which Koppel held out to him and said, after a rapid mental calculation: Eight hundred and twenty-three francs, ten centimes."

"Pardon me my questions which must seem to you of infantile stupidity. But I have so little experience in these matters."

"Certainly, certainly, Herr Doctor. There is no royal road to learning. We must all go to school."

"Will you tell me if there is anything now for me to do? Do they send me the money? or must I go after it somewhere?"

"You have only to go with these notifications to the desk at each place. To-morrow you pay the *agent*

de change and the following day, the *coulissier* pays you."

"Can not both be done the same day?"

"The customer pays one day earlier than the dealer does."

"Your rules favour you, it appears."

Pfiester laughed. "The Bourse itself made its own rules," he said. "A man's shirt is nearer to him than his coat. But it is not so bad as it seems. The *agents* are very stiff in their ways, but the *coulissiers* are more obliging. If you want your money to-morrow, you will not be sent away empty-handed."

Koppel thanked Pfiester and apologized for having given him the trouble of coming. The relations between the two had visibly changed. Pfiester's stature had increased, Koppel's had lessened. The former assumed a tone of good-natured, condescending superiority; the latter slipped into a certain mood of dependence which, from life-long habit, brought with it its invariable companion in Koppel's mental history, namely, a tendency to unconscious deference.

On the following day, after school was over in the forenoon, Koppel, without lingering a moment to talk with Wolzen and the other teachers, went across the river. He went on foot, for to take an omnibus in Paris, a man must have time to spare, and Koppel had none. The office of the *coulissier* was in the rue de Provence, that of the *agent de change* not far distant, in the rue Drouot. The cashier at the *coulissier's* office said to Koppel, as the latter presented the letter of notification: "Excuse me, we pay to-morrow. Our customers pay to-day."

"I know," Koppel replied, without betraying the increasingly strong discomfort that he felt, "but I live, as you see by this address, at the other end of Paris, and as I happened to be near ——"

The cashier grumbled something unintelligible, and then he said: "Well, I don't mind; as long as it is such a trifle; but next time I must beg you to observe the rule." And he paid Koppel eight hundred and twenty-eight francs, and ten centimes across the coun-

ter, accompanying it with a memorandum, the "*bordereau*."

Koppel left the office greatly relieved, and went cheerfully to the *agent de change*. It did not occur to him to reflect that at the counter there had been standing a long row of people who must have lost, for they were there to pay their money. He felt the money in his breast-pocket; in his ear still rung the cashier's words: "As long as it is such a trifle." A trifle, eight hundred francs! What sums was this man in the habit of paying out to lucky customers! How much must one receive from him to make him look less disdainful, to make the affair seem of some importance to him? It did not depress Koppel's mental exaltation that he had to pay over to the *agent* the larger part of what he had just won. In his breast-pocket still remained some rustling blue bank-notes, in his porte-monnaie, some gold-pieces, which were not there before, which had come to him as if on wings, without any effort of his own.

It was now late; dinner was waiting at home; the weather was unpleasant, the pavements wet. Why return on foot, getting fatigued and muddy like a vagrant, masterless cur of the street? He might indulge himself in a little comfort, and spare his family their surprised anxiety at his unusual delay. He hailed a fiacre and drove home. On the way, for the first few minutes, he had a flattering consciousness of success. It seemed to him that he was about to conquer Paris. As he passed through rue Vivienne he felt a certain superiority over the crowd who were elbowing each other on the sidewalk.

At sight of the Bourse, on whose broad steps and under whose columned portico, a crowd of men madly gesticulated and howled, he could not help smiling. This tempestuous mass were screaming for him also. Out of their ridiculous and somewhat offensive tumult shaped itself for him a new word of destiny!

He did not, however, linger very long upon these thoughts, for another idea began to occupy his mind.

It had been fortunate that, this time, his gain exceeded his loss. But what if the outlay a few hundred francs had been required? He had not taken this possibility into consideration when he had given his order, for he did not know that the fluctuations of the market would have to be made good twice in the month. His wife had the care of their money and securities. He would have been obliged to ask her for the needed funds. But on what pretext? For he would not dare to tell the truth. And even now, as a gainer, he was not free from anxiety; for what was he to do with the money he had gained and should in future gain? If he kept it about him, it would be discovered when his clothes were brushed; in a drawer of his writing-table, his wife might find it. To hand it over to her was out of the question, since he was unwilling to confess how he had obtained it.

He went over in his mind all possible expedients. To deposit the money in a bank and take a cheque-book? But then, he must conceal the cheque-book, and that difficulty would be the same as with the money itself. The falsehood and dissimulation in which he was about to involve himself had now nearly ceased to trouble him, but on the other hand, the humour of the situation became apparent. He already scarcely knew what to do with his money! It was the old saying, over again, that the rich man, too, has his anxieties! Then a ray of light broke in. He would simply hire one of the boxes in the safety-vault of the *Crédit Lyonnais*. There he could shelter whatever his wife must not see. The key might easily be kept out of her way. This was the egg of Columbus. But was it essential to conceal the key? He could perfectly well say to his wife that he had thought it advisable to hire this box; and here was the best point in this clever solution of the problem: it really was imprudent to keep their valuable papers in the house. In this way he would have the papers always at his command without the embarrassing supervision of his wife; and if at any time, contrary to all probability, adjustments unfavourable to himself should occur, he could

get through without having the discomfort of making some pretext to his wife.

He was very merry when he reached home, and joked about leaving his family to starve. He found his mother and Oscar already at the table, for which Frau Käthe apologized—the boy must go to his school, and the old lady would suffer from irregular hours; on this account she had had dinner for the two, when he did not come home at one o'clock. To her inquiries why he was late, he answered carelessly that he had something to do and had not been able to finish it earlier.

The same evening he spoke to her about the box at the *Crédit Lyonnais*. It was not a good idea, he said, to keep their valuable papers in a closet merely. He proposed to have a box at the *Crédit Lyonnais*. It ought really to have been done long ago, he added.

Frau Käthe was not so sure. "How long have you been so anxious about this?" she asked. "The rooms are never left alone. There is always someone here. And masked robbers are not likely to visit the *rue Saint-André-des-Arts*."

Koppel related various incidents to her; he added furthermore that there was a danger of fire to be taken into account, and he ended by making her quite anxious. She inquired about the arrangement of safety vaults, and whether one were also secured against fraud, and what the expense would be. Hearing that the smallest box would cost forty francs a year, she made a wry face; but she raised no objection when Koppel declared that his feeling of anxiety on the subject impelled him, irresistibly, to this small expense.

The following day was Thursday, the school-holiday in Paris. Koppel took advantage of his leisure to go to the *Crédit Lyonnais*. After this was done, he went to a stationer's and bought a stout leather portfolio. This was not cheap, but what is twenty-five francs to a man who any day can make several hundred? He could no longer keep his securities done up in a news-

paper and a piece of oil-cloth as heretofore. A capitalist must have his valuable papers in a portfolio!

A capitalist! a despicable coupon-cutter! This, he was in the way to become,—he, who had so eloquently pointed out how contemptible and hateful this class of humanity was! Undoubtedly it was a slight infidelity to principle! But to whom does life allow the chalk-line of faultless consistency? His transgression was permissible. He exploited no man. The money that he gained was not taken from any labourer. To be a martyr to one's faith was the privilege of the man only who stood alone in the world. *He* was responsible for a family. It would be folly not to take advantage of present circumstances, for fear of being misjudged. His fruitless sulking against economic wrongs did not alter them in the least, and if he strove to become a man of independent fortune, it was, of course, with the desire, first, to make life more agreeable to his own family, but, furthermore, to be able to work more freely and successfully in the direction of his convictions. These considerations appeased his conscience to the most satisfactory degree.

The transference of the securities was effected with a certain solemnity. Koppel took Frau Käthe along in the fiacre when he went to the Crédit Lyonnais. As the prudent father of a family he thought of everything. He had his wife's signature with his own, and thus secured to her the right to visit the box. "This is for life and death," he said, smiling; "there will be nothing further to do, if I should be taken away." Obtaining a permit in the office, he conducted Frau Käthe down stairs to visit the vaults. They were lighted by electricity; the ceiling and floor were of thick flint glass in iron setting, the walls were of steel-plate, with rows of iron drawers. In the centre of each room were chairs and a table. A watchman, at the head of the stairs, took Koppel's permit, and unlocked the door in the iron screen. Below, an attendant unlocked the iron door of the section where Koppel's cell was, then withdrew, not to overlook him as he opened his own little compartment.

"Notice how it is done," Koppel said, and showed his wife about turning the three knobs near the key-hole until the selected group of three figures should be obtained. "Be sure to remember the numbers: two, seventeen, sixteen,—our *two* children, and their *ages*. For what is here guarded is our children's future!"

Frau Käthe silently wondered at the emotion which Koppel's voice betrayed, as she sought, herself, to unlock the drawer. She turned the knobs carefully, and slow, not to miss a single click; and then put in the key. It did not move.

"You have counted wrong. Begin again."

Frau Käthe did as she was bid. This time she was successful. "Do you know," she said, with a smile, when she felt the key catch and turn, "I admire the pretty idea in your figures; but I don't think it's useful, one so easily makes a mistake. How would it do to leave off the tens, and use only the six and seven?"

"Yes, if you like," answered Koppel and he set the lock according to the new group of figures. When the door was open, and Koppel drew out the leather portfolio, Frau Käthe exclaimed: "What a beauty! Does the bank furnish these? How very imposing!" Koppel did not think it was necessary to enlighten her and he said only: "You don't sufficiently feel that you are in a temple of wealth here! No doubt, behind these iron doors, there repose a thousand million francs, or more. Compared with these, the treasure-vaults of the Arabian Nights are mere child's baby-houses." "Yes," rejoined Frau Käthe, as she looked about her, "and there seem to be dragons here, too, that guard the treasure."

A person did not need to be so quick and sharp-sighted an observer as Frau Käthe to remark that everything here indicated hostility and suspicion. The table in the middle of the room was divided by high partitions into as many sections as there were chairs, so that no one could overlook his neighbour, whether the latter were cutting off his coupons or merely examining his papers. If any one passed be-

hind an occupied chair, the occupant looked quickly round, followed the passer-by with a jealous glance, and covered his possessions with his arms stretched out over the table. A man about to open his box would make a loud rattling with the knobs, in order to deceive any person who might be on the watch, and prevent the other from counting the numbers with himself. When he had the little cell open he would cover it carefully with his person as he stood, so that no one could look in. Every man seemed to regard every other man as a robber, and protected his property against that other, either craftily, or with rude, open precaution.

"Certainly, this does not seem to be the home of confidence and brotherly love," Koppel said, as they went up stairs, "but steel plates and combination-locks would scarcely be the natural accompaniment of that sentiment."

His first enterprise gave Koppel unimpaired satisfaction. The Calabrians rose slowly but steadily; the Sicilians fluctuated but little from the price which he had paid. The next three settling-days were three victories. He gained a good deal and lost very little. He rose visibly in the esteem of the *coullissier's* cashier, and the head of the house himself made a little friendly conversation with him, when Koppel came to receive his winnings, and congratulated him very politely on the clear-sightedness he had shown in the transaction. At the end of March the Calabrians seemed to have become stationary. For a week their price had scarcely varied. Koppel became impatient, and gave an order to sell at three hundred and forty. This was the critical moment. Now it would be seen whether he could land his fish, and had really made money out of the venture. There followed three days of suspense. He hastened after school to buy the *Temps*, and read the quotations. On the first day, the Calabrians were quoted at three hundred and forty, but evidently it had not been possible to get that price, for there was no mention of the eagerly-awaited sale. On the second day, there was a drop to 338 75.

This was a disappointment. He began to ponder whether he ought not to fix a lower selling price, but decided, however, to wait one day more. Right! on the third day the price jumped to 347.50, and the last delivery brought the desired letter from the broker, who informed him that his hundred Calabrians had been sold at three hundred and forty francs. Now he regretted that he had not required three hundred and forty-five, but he conquered this slight irritation, and was very well satisfied with himself that he had had the wisdom to act upon the rule: "Thou shalt not be insatiable."

Proudly he entered in his pocket-book a gain of three thousand two hundred francs. His profit amounted to this sum, after the deduction of some little expenses,—for fiacres, for the leather portfolio, etc., which he had permitted himself. As a matter of fact, he could lodge in his box at the safety-vault only about two thousand three hundred francs, for up to date he had been obliged to pay about nine hundred francs on his Sicilians. This sum, however, he did not regard as lost, but only as for the moment not available, and did not feel that it reduced the amount of his profit. Three thousand two hundred francs! Considerably more than he could earn by a quarter's hard work. And what had he had to do to gain it? Write one letter, talk now and then with Pfister, and, twice in the month, go to the rue de Provence and the rue Drouot in a fiacre. That was all. Really it was culpable, not earlier to have stretched out his hand and gathered the fruits of this Garden of the Hesperides, which, as his experience had taught him, it required no Herculean labor to secure. Who can tell where now he might be, had he earlier been aware of the opportunity?

Pfister did not fail to come in search of him at the school. "I am really pleased," he said. "That is the way to speculate. It is really a pleasure to work with you. You don't get nervous, you have patience, you don't want to get out too early with too small a

profit. On the other hand, you don't expect the earth. You are just right."

"I am a Brandenburger," was all Koppel allowed himself to answer; "we are hardy perennials."

"That's the way to succeed," Pfister remarked, speaking with authority; "the man is always in the right who doesn't lose his patience: for at the Bourse every quotation is repeated sooner or later; the only thing is to stay where you are and be tranquil, if there comes a run of bad luck! Losses happen when a man gets rattled and goes off at half-cock."

"That wouldn't be my way," Koppel said, and smiled, with a consciousness of his own courage.

Pfister again had a pocket full of advice. He especially urged Koppel to buy Almaden. It had recently gone up very rapidly, from one hundred and eighty to four hundred and fifty francs, but this was only the beginning; the stock would go at least as high as one thousand francs; perhaps, higher. And it was the safest thing that had ever been known. A great syndicate had been formed to control the quicksilver output of the whole world. All quicksilver stocks were now gilt-edged. The quicksilver-syndicate included all the great houses. Baron Agostini, Baron Henneberg, all the mine-owners in Spain and South America, were in it."

Koppel pricked up his ears at these names. He promised to take the subject into consideration and when he had decided, to let Pfister know.

"Don't hesitate long, Herr Doctor," Pfister said, as he went away, "but take hold at once. The quotations of the Almaden go up every day by leaps of ten to twenty francs. Every day's reflection costs you a *louis*."

Pfister's communication gave Koppel subject for thought. He felt a certain displeasure towards Henneberg. It was not friendly in the latter not to give him a hint of the new enterprise. If *he* were a millionaire, he would have more regard for his friends and acquaintances than Henneberg had. But there might be some mistake. Perhaps Pfister had been

talking at random, as the man often did. He would take an opportunity to talk with Henneberg himself, and learn the true state of affairs.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PERFORMANCE OF PARSIFAL.

THE opportunity of talking with Henneberg occurred in a few days. The Koppels received an invitation to attend a performance of *Parsifal*, to be given at the home of Baroness Agostini in Holy Week. The invitation was addressed to Monsieur, Madame and Mademoiselle Koppel. It caused great excitement to the whole family. Frau Käthe's first idea was to refuse. She had never yet even been asked to call; if the baroness did not wish to have her acquaintance, why should she invite her to a grand entertainment like this? Koppel objected to this decision. It was modest and tactful in the baroness, he said, to invite them, for the first time, when she had something specially attractive to offer them. Then, Frau Käthe declared that the Agostinis were no suitable acquaintances for her or, especially, for Elsa; what had simple folk like themselves to do with people of such colossal wealth? This brought out a reply from Elsa: to hear an opera in a private house, there would be a very great number of people invited; you would sit in an immense hall and enjoy the performance, and need have very little to do with any one present. When Frau Käthe found that her husband and her daughter were both against her, she finally came out with the real reason of her opposition. Neither she nor Elsa had suitable toilettes for such an occasion; it was no sacrifice to stay at home; but to present herself among these stunning millionaires in cheap, old-fashioned clothes, like a brown sparrow among parakeets—that, she would not do!

"If that is all the trouble," Koppel exclaimed, "it can be remedied very easily. We have nine days before us. There is time enough to get whatever is necessary."

"That would be an expensive opera ticket," Frau Käthe rejoined.

"Don't be too niggardly," Koppel said, coaxingly; "we can afford it; you can have a suitable gown."

"It seems to me you are putting on airs, Hugo; that comes from associating with millionaires."

"No, my dear Käthe, I only wish that, for once, you should have the pleasure of being really well-dressed. You're not an old lady yet, by any means, and if you are well gotten up, you will look at least as handsome as these ladies whom you call 'stunning millionaires.' " He stroked her brown hair tenderly, and a slight colour came into her face. "And Elsa will be eighteen in May," he continued. "It is time that we let her go out a little. We can't keep her perpetually a Cinderella in this sleepy old place. And if she is going into society, we must see to it that she has her little flag, too!"

Elsa snatched her father's hand and kissed it gratefully. There was nothing left for Frau Käthe but to submit.

The ordering of the two party-gowns was a great occasion. Frau Käthe wished to employ the little dressmaker in the neighbourhood who was accustomed to come to the house for a few days twice a year and make what was needed for the grandmother, the mother, and the daughter, while Frau Käthe and Elsa lent a capable hand. Koppel objected—in the most decided language—that this modest seamstress could not possibly have the *chic* required for evening dress. He insisted that the gowns should be ordered at one of the great places, and he also said that he would go too, on this important errand, so that Frau Käthe might not feel too much anxiety.

Koppel first went alone to this shop, and entered into a conspiracy with the forewoman. It was agreed between them, that when he came with his ladies on

the following day, the price of everything shown which they might order, should be stated to them as exactly half of what it really was. The saleswoman was extremely astonished ; with all the experience of a great Paris establishment, this was something new to her. She had quite often been desired by lady-customers to understate or to overstate charges, according as a husband or some one else was to pay the bill ; but that a man should practice a pious fraud towards the ladies of his family, and induce them to select an expensive object under the idea that it was cheap—this was a thing unparalleled ! She played her part, however, faithfully in the presence of Frau Käthe and Elsa. She showed the most beautiful silks, laces, and flowers, and the most captivating models, and when Frau Käthe, shocked, turned away, and asked to see simpler things, then the saleswoman said that Madame was making a mistake not to take advantage of such a bargain, the price had just been reduced, and was, in fact, but half of that named on the ticket. By this argument, Frau Käthe was induced to go as high as two hundred francs apiece for the two gowns. Then Koppel insisted they must both have wraps, and without minding her whispered remonstrance, he carried it through. But when they were again in the street, Frau Käthe clasped her hands together and declared that to have spent seven hundred and twenty francs on these things was "*ja himmelschreiend !*"

"It's only once, you know," Koppel said, consolingly. What would the good little woman say if she knew that it was 1420 francs ! he thought to himself. She would fret herself ill. One must come to it by degrees, to treat one's self to handsome things and pay for them accordingly ! It was to be hoped she would learn.

When the gowns were brought to be tried on, Elsa insisted on having Adèle and Blanche Masmajour called in. The two girls, on their part, could not enjoy the sight alone, and brought with them their remonstrating mother. The three admired, frankly,

cordially, with sheer delight in beauty. Frau Käthe's silk was in two tones, pearl-gray and lavender, matched with velvet slightly darker, cut somewhat *decolletée*, according to the imperative requirement of the forewoman, but Frau Käthe had obtained thus much concession from that inexorable arbiter of fashions, that the neck and arms should be veiled with a quantity of white lace. Elsa's gown was an inspired poem in crêpe de chine, pale green with trimmings of very delicate pink. With this airy material surrounding her, she seemed to be enwrapped in one of those vapoury clouds, wherewith Watteau and Boucher and Fragonard delight to surround their goddesses. The wraps for mother and daughter were of cherry-coloured plush, trimmed with white fur, and lined with steel-blue silk. The impetuous Blanche threw her arms about Elsa's neck, when she saw all these splendours; and Adèle murmured: "That is royal!"

After the workwoman had gone, Madame Masmajour complimented Frau Käthe on her perfect taste, betraying her surprise at the same time, and even saying naïvely that no Frenchwoman could have made a better selection; that material and style and combination of colour were all exquisite; that Fräulein Elsa was already a little Parisian in matters of taste! Then she ventured to inquire, with many apologies, as to the cost, which Frau Käthe told her, as she herself had been told. Madame Masmajour was dumb with amazement for a few minutes, then she said: "Well! you have no cause to complain, as most foreigners do, that things are dear in Paris!"

In the evening when Frau Käthe and Elsa arrayed themselves for the first time in their new attire, the aged grandmother shed tears of delight over the entrancing picture; and it made so great an impression upon Oscar also that he was quite intimidated. "*Ach!* how handsome you are!" he said, half whispering, and scarcely dared, holding himself off as far as possible, to kiss his mother's hand very deferentially. "And you, Elsa, you are almost too elegant to be a fellow's sister!"

"Don't be silly," Elsa replied, smiling, and she gave him a little pat on the cheek.

"You and I are the Cinderellas that have to stay at home," Oscar whispered to his grandmother.

"Look at this chicken!" cried the old lady, "perhaps you want to run about to soirées? Get your lessons done and then go to bed, as you ought!" She trotted all around Elsa to observe the effect from every side and could not be satisfied with looking at her. "If you don't make a conquest to-night," the old lady said, "it will be because there was nobody but old women there!"

Elsa laughed aloud. The idea had never entered her mind. She had not yet learned to regard a new and pretty gown as a weapon of attack.

Koppel had looked on, content but thoughtful, at this animated family scene. He was proud of his wife and daughter, and also a little proud of himself, that he had made it possible for them to appear so advantageously.

"Now I observe for the first time the one thing that is lacking," he said, smiling.

"What is it?" asked Elsa.

"To you, nothing; you have your youth. But your mother would look well to have a pearl-necklace."

"And also a diamond crown on my head!" exclaimed Frau Kathe almost vexed.

"Why not?" retorted Koppel.

"Also a carriage, and lackeys and all the rest of the *klimbim*!"

"You might as well have it, as the Baroness Agostini," Koppel replied calmly; and in his mind he already beheld his wife surrounded by all that luxury which, at the present moment, she mentioned so scoffingly.

He was extremely conscious that his fiacre was the only hired vehicle in the long row of carriages which brought the guests to the Agostini *hôtel*. Who could say, perhaps, some day, he and his family, might attend festivities of this kind, driving thither in their own coupé also!

In the brilliantly lighted rooms ladies were moving about, in Worth toilettes over which there streamed a flood of diamonds and pearls representing vast wealth ; as the Koppels made their way along, however, all heads were turned, either slyly or frankly, to observe the beautiful girl who walked between her father and mother, a very personification of Spring. Her round creamy cheeks, her candid white brow, her scarlet lips, and the graceful head, with a single rose-bud for its only ornament in the luxuriant mass of her golden brown hair, were radiant with health and buoyant youth, and beauty in its purest form. Her entrance excited attention. She was the only girl in the whole assembly, which consisted of self-conscious-looking men, who sought to appear younger than they were, and a very small number of ladies, among whom the still young and fairly good-looking were a striking exception.

The maître d'hôtel, with loud voice, announced the arriving guests, whom the Baroness Agostini and her husband received at the folding-doors. The baroness wore her mask of pride and her reception of the guests was formal in the extreme. But Frau Käthe and Elsa she welcomed with her most cordial smile ; she detained them, holding a hand of each, and summoned one of the lackeys from the antechamber to conduct the two ladies to her own loge in the great hall.

This hall had been fitted up as an extremely elegant little theatre. The decoration was in white, gold, and blue,—white-lacquered panelling, with door-hinges, mouldings and frames of gilt ; pale-blue ceiling, dark-blue carpet, lapis-lazuli-blue velvet for all the draperies. Down each of the two sides of the hall four spacious loges had been constructed which, with their curving balustrade in white and gold, and their blue velvet upholstery, were like so many jewel-boxes. Between these loges (which in the rear were enclosed only as high as their balustrade in front), and the wall, there was left a broad passage-way giving access to them. In the hall were eight rows of gilded armchairs, comfortably upholstered in blue velvet, ten chairs in each



row, the successive rows being slightly raised one above another, from the stage to the back of the hall. Adjacent, projecting out over the courtyard, there was a very large winter-garden, supported on iron pillars, and usually separated from the great hall by a glass partition. This glass had been removed, and the winter-garden accommodated the stage and the orchestra. Between the hall and the stage was a belt of fine azaleas, tulips, crocuses and hyacinths, of all colours; and, beyond had been sunk a long, wide depression for the orchestra, in imitation of the regulation "*tönenden Abgrund*" of Bayreuth.

The ladies were grouped in the loges, the men occupied the armchairs that had been arranged in the hall, except so far as they preferred to remain in the passage-way behind the boxes, or in the open space behind the rows of chairs. Here Koppel at once perceived Henneberg, who was standing with Kohn, Count Beira, and an unknown young man. Henneberg greeted Koppel heartily and introduced the stranger to him. It was Lieut. von Brünne-Tillig, an attaché of the German embassy; reddish blond, slender, about thirty years old, monocle in his steel-blue eye, a heavy moustache, hair correctly parted front and back, confident in his bearing, civil but cool in talking, alert in his movements, manifestly content with the world and with himself. After a few of the commonplace remarks which men of the same country, meeting in a foreign land, naturally interchange, Brünne-Tillig suddenly gave a cry of surprise: "*Schwerebrett*, I must say! When a little Parisian girl takes the trouble to be charming, she does it, however young! Who is that little princess out of a fairy story?"

At the moment, Frau Käthe and Elsa were just taking their places in the first loge on the left. Elsa in front, Frau Käthe, in spite of the respectful protest of the lackey who showed them to their seats, in a chair behind hers.

Before Henneberg, to whom the question was addressed, could answer, Koppel had spoken: "You are

too kind, Herr von Brünne-Tillig. 'The little princess out of a fairy-story,' is my daughter."

"My congratulations, Herr Doctor! Pardon my expression. I had no idea—I was really taken by surprise!"

"Oh, certainly."

"May I venture to beg the honour of being presented to the gracious Fräulein?"

"With pleasure."

The introduction could not take place at once, for the musicians had begun tuning their instruments, the last guests had arrived, the baroness left her place at the entrance of the hall, and, attended by the *maitre d'hôtel*, was just coming to her seat. Baron Agostini however, at this moment, quietly slipped out of the hall; but he was not unnoticed. Kohn had observed his departure.

"Suppose we follow Agostini," he whispered to Henneberg. "When once the door is shut, we cannot get out, at least till the end of the first act."

Koppel would have been pleased to remain; stronger, however, than his wish to hear the opera, of which he had already read much, was his desire, quietly, and in detail, to talk over the great quicksilver monopoly. That Kohn, also, was one of the initiated, he did not doubt.

Henneberg shook his head negatively in reply to Kohn's proposition, and the latter left the hall, accompanied only by Koppel. The lackeys shut the door behind them, and a moment later were heard the first notes of the prelude.

Kohn knew his way about the house, and he led Koppel through a passage hung with Gobelin tapestry, and through a library of elegantly bound books—adorned with marble and bronze busts and having an allegorical painted ceiling—into a Japanese smoking-room, where a few cynics had already sought shelter from the delights of art.

"Do not consider me a barbarian," Kohn said, as he took a cigar, and sank luxuriously upon a pillowed divan. "I am interested in Wagner, of course, as in

every noted Antisemite. I have been in Bayreuth, myself."

"The baroness is evidently an enthusiastic Wagnerian," Koppel rejoined. "A performance like this must make a frightful amount of trouble in a house."

"I should think so! The mere preparation of the hall, the orchestra and the stage, costs forty thousand francs. Then there is the whole orchestra from the Grand Opera, and there is Kundry, who came expressly from Germany for this evening, and the first tenor—I estimate that this evening's amusement costs her not less than eighty-five thousand francs."

"That is a great deal."

"For the pleasure she gets out of it, it's a big lump of money. But what does that matter to the Agostinis, especially now when the baron gets half a dozen million a month from this quicksilver business?"

"Really?"

"Yes. It would be more rather than less."

"You are also in this affair, Herr Kohn?"

"Oh, I am only a fifth wheel," laughed Kohn. "No; the prime mover in it is your friend, Baron Henneberg. He's a fellow of talent! *alle wetter!* Whatever he touches sweats gold in streams!"

"Is it indiscreet if I ask you to tell me something more in detail about this quicksilver business?"

"It is no longer a secret. Baron Henneberg simply formed the idea of buying up all the present supply, and of concluding long contracts with all the known mines, which give him the exclusive right to the entire output at a certain fixed price. This is now done; it was a very brilliant scheme, brilliantly carried into execution. In less than three months the baron mastered the subject completely—the statistics of production and demand, the cost of the metal in the different mines, the organization of the company, everything was brought into shape. And the contracts were all made by letter, with the exception of two journeys to London, and without the owners of any one mine having an idea of what was going on in respect to the others.

It was grandly done. Such a Prussian *Junker* as he is can do anything."

"A Prussian *Junker*—hm!" said Koppel.

"Of course I know his title is Portuguese."

"His title?" Koppel asked, in amazement.

"What! didn't you know?"

"I thought you only called him baron because he was of the high finance."

"Not at all! He was made a baron quite recently in Portugal. It was really very amusing. The Portuguese wanted to make him a marquis, but he declared himself to be only a baron. I do not mean his title, I mean as to his descent."

"True enough—in that respect——"

"It was a surprise, such as one does not often experience, when the baron, early in January, called together a few of his friends, of whom his syndicate was to consist. Calmly and clearly, as he might in earlier days have explained to his pupils the theory of Pythagoras, he explained to us in less than ten minutes the whole business. Here are figures; here are the memoranda of the purchases of quicksilver; and here the contracts with the mines. We have so many millions to pay annually; so many millions we shall receive; so many are profit, which in ten years will amount to so many. There was the whole thing in a nutshell. When he had finished speaking, there was scarcely a question to be asked. Even General Zagal had understood; and every man present knew to a penny by how much he had become richer, in those ten minutes. Old Agostini, usually as cold-nosed as a well dog, and close shut as a box, was so enraptured that he embraced Henneberg on the spot. It's the literal truth."

"That scarcely was Henneberg's most valued reward!"

Kohn smiled with a peculiar expression, and went on talking.

"Naturally, the results of this operation were soon apparent when the price of quicksilver went up, as of course it did. The Bourse pricked up their ears. They thought it was a hoax. Some accepted the sit-

uation, when it was whispered about who were in the syndicate; others tried to oppose it. By this time these last understand clearly that they put their necks into a noose. It is my impression they lose eighty or a hundred millions. That was an extra profit which fell in. This was the only unforeseen incident, or rather the only one not foreseen to its full extent, in the whole affair, in which, with this exception, there was no surprise possible."

"Except the buyers' surprise when they find that their commodity has suddenly increased in price."

"The price has doubled," Kohn remarked quietly. "Do you think that is fair?"

"Why not? Is it a law of nature that quicksilver must cost three pounds, and not six, the flask? It is not a necessary of life. Those who use it can pay for it, and others do not want it."

"But that is a frightful exploitation."

"The stockholders of the Almaden company and of the French-Oriental bank will scarcely think so, when they receive their trebled dividends. No one needs pity but those who stood out, and for them I don't think you will care very much."

"No. But to enhance the value of a commodity in such a way as that is a frightful outrage. Your syndicate, by its millions, is stronger than the buyer, and abuses its power to levy a contribution."

"It is not so bad as you think, Herr Doctor. The consumers are ten thousand, or, perhaps, including all uses, we might say, a million. Each individual scarcely feels his loss. But the syndicate is only half a dozen men. And so, the little sums amount to a great mass. Don't you see that it also has its good side—that great wealth should be built up with only an imperceptible sacrifice made by the individuals in the crowd? Ask our Kundry whether she was indignant when she received her honorarium of three thousand francs. Ask our friend Pierre, you remember the painter who was your neighbour at Henneberg's dinner, whether the commissions displease him which he has

lately received from Henneberg. There are two sides to every question, Herr Doctor."

Koppel made no attempt to reply, excusing himself in his own mind for thus abandoning his position by the thought that he was not seeking to bring Kohn back to business morality, but to gain from him some useful information. After a minute's pause, he asked, as if casually :

"Would it be well to buy Almaden, Herr Kohn?"

Kohn looked at him in much surprise.

"Are you asking on your own account?" he said.

"Why not," Koppel replied, "if it is a good and safe thing?"

Kohn puffed at his cigar silently for a few minutes, then he said :

"If you hold Almaden as an investment you might do worse. For the next ten years it will certainly pay a good dividend. Probably it will do so for a much longer period. For the contracts will, without doubt, be renewed when they expire. But the French-Oriental bank would be better still. It is destined to less fluctuations than the Almaden, which sometimes goes very low, and around which there will be tremendous battles in the next few months. But from mere speculation I must dissuade you."

"You say the Almaden is perfectly safe?"

"Certainly it is, according to human judgment. But who can answer positively for any mine. Speculation always contains a fraction of danger, however good the securities may be. And so, the father of a family, whose means are limited, has no right to speculate, when that is not his calling."

"In Paris, I think, every man does speculate."

"Yes. But I know no outsider who ever, in the end, made anything at the Bourse."

"Is not that like the Phœnicians who magnified the terrors of the sea to keep competitors at home?"

"Pardon me, Herr Doctor; when outsiders speculate, we certainly win, at least, an agent's commission. It is pure disinterestedness in me when I recommend prudence."

Koppel had a mental vision of his box in the safety-vault of the *Crédit Lyonnais*, and the bank notes lying in it, which he had won at the *Bourse*; and he thought, "I know better."

The first act of *Parsifal* was just over, and many of the guests were leaving the hall, to smoke a cigarette, or to drink a glass of sec at the buffet. Henneberg appeared at the door of the Japanese smoking-room. By the train that followed him it was plain to see what a great man he had become. He was looking for Koppel, and perceiving the latter, came up to him at once. "You deprived yourself of a great pleasure," he said.

"When I talk with Herr Kohn I do not waste my time," Koppel replied; and he added, "I hear that you are on the way to become a *milliardaire*."

"A milliard is a trifle too much," rejoined Henneberg, with a proudly modest smile, as he dropped into a chair at Koppel's side. He spoke in German, whereat Zagal and the other men who had come in with him drew back. Kohn, also, joined another group, and the two friends were left alone.

"And not to reveal by a word what you were planning! I had not thought you were so secretive."

"To be silent is the first condition of success in a case like this."

"But you took Kohn and the other men into the secret."

"When everything was settled and determined. That had to be done. I alone, with my few millions, could not move the mountain. There must be strong shoulders at my side."

"Is Kohn so strong, then?"

"He is not really without means. He had four or five millions already when he entered the syndicate; but he is one of the first arbitragers in the place, and his experience at the *Bourse* makes him invaluable. But let us leave these tiresome things."

"Don't do that! You would scarcely devote yourself to them as you do, if you found them tiresome."

"I don't do it for my amusement, you may believe."

"Why, then? You were a rich man already, without your quicksilver—"

"Rich? But what is rich? I know, here in Paris, a poor savant who considers himself rich, when he can earn fifty francs a month! Everything depends on what you require and expect from life. I am unable to content myself in a condition of mediocrity; one must suppress his most reasonable wishes; and this I have not the patience to endure. Take, for instance, something that had happened very lately. In January some rough fellow moved in, where I live, and took the apartment directly over mine. The uproar that this man and his family made, day and night, is simply indescribable. It was not to be endured. There was only a choice between moving out myself, or pitching out the other fellow. I am the unlucky slave of habit. It would have upset me frightfully to leave my caboose, I have now got so settled there. There was nothing for me to do but to buy tranquillity of my neighbour. But it was not cheap, persuading him, in the middle of winter to turn out, bag and baggage. I took the same occasion to free the house of its other tenants; and not to have to do this again, I bought the whole house. And so I secured peace. But you see, one must have means, to do a thing like that!"

"And so, you are all alone in that great house?"

"I am. And it is a rapture. An island of solitude, in the busiest quarter of Paris! It is remarkable how the original characteristics of a man break out when he no longer feels the restraint of circumstances! I discover in myself the inclination of my early Low-Saxon ancestors to dwell in solitary manor-houses, far away from neighbours."

"You could do that, at less cost, if you lived in the country."

"But you see I am not yet rich enough to do that. I am still tied to Paris. And then, it is not so cheap as you think, in the country, if you wish to be undisturbed, and, at the same time, cannot do without the comforts of civilization. To be at least half a mile distant from the sound of wheels and crack of whips,

and riotous village-quarrels, you must live in a park at least a mile each way. That means six or seven hundred acres. With this, a fairly good house; and the whole in a good country,—you would not easily get that for a million francs."

Koppel was thinking all the time of the goat's stall under the staircase.

"You are really rather exacting. But it's all right when a man can be. I can only hope that all this makes you happy."

Henneberg's face grew sombre. "Happy?" he said. "Happiness is not a function of money, to express it mathematically. That is a thing of the soul, not of the pocket. One has it in oneself; or, one has it not. But, in the lack of happiness, one may have abundant gratifications. They are the small change of happiness, and thirteen groschen do make a thaler."

"I question whether mere gratifications are worth so much effort?"

"That depends upon the gratifications and the effort. My effort is an idea which merely comes, and there it is. And my gratifications are perhaps not those of a night-watchman. Earlier in my life, people walked over me. It is quite an agreeable change that now I am at liberty to walk over other people."

"That strikes me as rude."

"You mustn't ride a comparison too hard, you school-fox," said Henneberg, smiling.

"For the time, I am still that, sure enough."

This remark escaped Koppel half unconsciously. He was instantly sorry to have said it, for it seemed to him he had betrayed a secret, of which he himself hardly was aware as yet. Henneberg, however, had scarcely noticed what he said, and evidently thought nothing of it.

"I have not seen the king this evening," said Henneberg, changing the subject, for the conversation was beginning to be disagreeable to him.

"What king?"

"Him of Laos. I don't know so very many crowned heads."

"*Ach so!* No, him you will never see in this house. No person in any degree doubtful is received by the baroness. She has no taste for jokers."

"What is the owl doing? Has he gone back yet to his kingdom?"

"No. He is still trying to get a loan. I often find myself strongly inclined to set him afloat. It would be such a joke to see him, over there in Asia, with his dukes and his chamberlains performing his tragi-comedy of royalty."

"I think, if you were to make him his loan, he would be clever enough to find use for it in Paris."

"By no means. He is a born adventurer, and his playing at royalty is a far greater pleasure to him than women or *sec* could be. I can trace that in him distinctly. Otherwise, the fellow would not interest me in the least."

The Japanese smoking-room was now nearly empty. Also from the buffet the guests were streaming back into the hall. "The second act is beginning," said Henneberg rising. "Come. You must want to hear this."

Koppel went in. The Baroness Agostini was not yet there; she appeared almost immediately, however, accompanied by Frau Käthe and Elsa. Brünne-Tillig followed them, invited by a gesture of the baroness. This time Frau Käthe could not refuse a front seat and as she sat down she sought her husband with her eyes all over the hall, smiling and blushing with pleasure when she discovered him at Henneberg's side in an armchair of the last row.

Koppel enjoyed the performance not so much directly as though the sparkling eyes and the enthusiastic rapture of Elsa, who never once looked away from the stage, but was completely absorbed in what went on there. He had very seldom taken his daughter to the theatre, and she brought to the fairy-land beyond the footlights an unblunted capacity for enthusiasm and belief. Henneberg's eyes also were more attracted by the loge than by the stage; and when, at the close of the performance, the curtain did

not fall but went up instead and unfolded itself like a very beautifully decorated rococo fan, then Henneberg took Koppel by the arm and said: "Now, let us be civil! We have neglected the ladies far too much."

Elsa hastened to meet her father when he appeared at the entrance to the loge—where the baroness had already risen to go—and stretching both hands out to him, exclaimed in French (as she always did, when particularly excited), "Ah, papa! I had no idea there could be anything so beautiful!"

"Nor had I!" Herr von Brünne Tillig observed, significantly, and bowing to the girl as he spoke.

The Baroness Agostini went for a few minutes into one of the salons, where she devoted herself to her guests, and received their compliments on the evening's entertainment, but as soon as possible she returned to the Koppels.

"Herr Doctor," she said, "I have been reproaching your charming daughter for hiding her light under a bushel, but she very justly tells me that I am speaking to the wrong person. It is a sin that you have never allowed her to exhibit some of her work."

"Is there any haste about it?" Koppel replied, smiling.

"Life is too short to lose any time," the baroness rejoined.

"Well, most gracious Frau Baroness, we can revert to this matter when the occasion comes. For this year, certainly, it is too late."

"By no means," exclaimed the baroness. "The new Salon of the Champ de Mars will not be so formal. I have many friends among the founders. We can perhaps arrange it to have Fräulein Elsa received, though it is a little late." And, deciding on the instant, as it was her wont to do, she went across to where the painter Pierre stood talking,—in a corner, with Kohn and a much be-diamonded old lady, apparently a foreigner,—and drew him aside. After rapid, animated whispering, she brought him back to her group, introduced him to Elsa, and said: "The mas-

ter has been so kind as to promise me that he will interest himself for you. You must not lose any time. In the morning you must send him what you have ready."

"I am at your service, mademoiselle," said the painter, bowing. "I am not the absolute master of the situation, but with madame la baronne to help us, I think we shall succeed. She carries everything through. Of what kind are your works?"

Elsa was extremely abashed and her cheeks burned. "I have different kinds," she said, hesitating. "But I don't dare. At most, I would send a pastel. It is not large. I hope it might be overlooked."

"If it is a picture of yourself, that could hardly happen," the painter rejoined, while his eye, critically and admiringly, dwelt upon Elsa's little face.

Also Baron Agostini, with Count Beira and General Zagal in his wake, appeared in view for a moment, congratulated his wife upon the success of the performance,—not a single note of which had he heard—and talked a little with Elsa about painting, when he understood that she was to exhibit in the approaching Salon of the Champ de Mars.

To return to her loge, the baroness took Koppel's arm, while Henneberg gave his to Elsa, and Brünne-Tillig hastened to escort Frau Käthe. Koppel was desired to take a seat, while the other two men went back into the salon, where Brünne-Tillig made earnest inquiries about the Koppel family.

After the performance was over, which had lasted till about one o'clock, the principal singers and the guests were bidden to a hot supper in the dining-room, but Frau Käthe was unwilling to stay longer, as she was very tired. The family took leave of Henneberg only, desiring him to excuse them to the Agostinis, and slipped away quietly. Brünne-Tillig, however, had not lost sight of them, and when they came to the stairs, there he stood, and begged permission of Koppel to call within a few days and inquire how the evening had agreed with the ladies; and this was cordially granted him.

Below stairs, a lackey hastened to ask whose carriage he should call. Koppel was much embarrassed, for he had, as a matter of course, sent his fiacre away. He felt humiliated at being obliged to murmur some confused, negative reply. At this moment, however, the *portier*, who had been busied with some other departure, perceived him, and whispered hurriedly some words to the lackey.

"Pardon me," the servant said, "I did not know. Monsieur's carriage is here."

"You are mistaken," Koppel replied, and would have walked away.

"Madame la baronne begs that you will use her carriage," the *portier* said, and the lackey hastened to open the door of the landau, which at that moment drove up.

"This enchanting baroness thinks of everything," Elsa exclaimed, as she took her seat.

"Her kindness is something really oppressive," said Frau Käthe; "I have actually suffered under it, for we can offer nothing in return."

"In what you are thinking of," Koppel rejoined, "she has indeed everything that heart could wish; but where the things end that can be bought with money, there human value gets its full significance. The baroness enjoys you, and I can understand this."

"Oh, you say that! But what is there in us, that she can enjoy?"

"Modesty does not shut out a proper self-appreciation. What I saw of the other ladies there, did not give me an idea that the baroness would be remarkably edified by their society."

"That is—true!" Frau Käthe said, thoughtfully. After a pause, she said: "Did you notice how few ladies there were there? To every one there were at least three gentlemen."

"In Paris there are so many unmarried men, especially in the financial world, and among foreigners," Koppel rejoined. "There is Henneberg, you know, and little Kohn, and any number of them."

This explanation did not seem to be altogether

satisfactory to Frau Käthe, but she said no more. Elsa, meanwhile, was lost in an enchanting dream, whose raptures were woven out of the lulling motion of the carriage, out of an occasional glance at the starry sky of the spring night, out of an echo of the evening's music, out of a delightful suspicion of her own consequence, and out of all sorts of mysterious and fascinating things—chief among them being the morning glamour of her youth.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SALON, AND A BIRTHDAY.

ELSA'S dreamy rapture lasted overnight and clung about her in the morning. The eagerness of the Masmajour girls to hear the whole story was no greater than her own to gratify them by telling it. But to talk of it with Oscar seemed in no way attractive to her. Until this moment, her brother had shared in all her secrets and had been her good comrade, with a trifle of submissiveness on his part. Now she felt that the experiences and impressions of the past evening were something which did not concern him at all, that he was far too much of a child to understand them. For herself, the evening had marked a momentous transition. Although she had been wearing long skirts for now two years, they had still seemed to her childish frocks. But last night's toilette had made her thoughts and feelings suddenly those of a young lady, and the range of her ideas was no longer in the same region with Oscar's.

Adèle and Blanche were at their work-table when Elsa swept in upon them like a little whirlwind. Madame Masmajour deserted the *brandade* which was in process of preparation in the kitchen and came to listen also. The girls had no occasion to ask a single

question ; Elsa told her story with a minuteness that omitted nothing. Madame Masmajour and Adèle were already familiar with certain rooms in the house of the baroness, from having seen them when they had carried home the hats that she had ordered ; and Blanche, also, knew these rooms from the descriptions her mother and sister had given her. But the great hall and the salons were entirely unknown to them all, and their fingers ceased working, in the eagerness with which they followed Elsa's words.

"But much more beautiful than the hall where the opera was performed," she said, after describing that, "was a salon just beyond, where we were during the entr'acte. Fancy a room four times as large as this, all blue,—the carpet sapphire blue, the walls the colour of lapis-lazuli, the ceiling covered with a very delicate forget-me-not blue stuff, full of a little, and drawn together in the centre like a sort of rosette, with tiny silver spangles all over it. Three of the walls had each two great pictures painted on them, which seemed like great arched windows opening upon beautiful landscapes. Oh, my dears,—landscapes that looked like Paradise!—full of sunlight, with far blue mountains, and little white houses, and sparkling brooks, and women, with gay red kerchiefs on their heads and riotous striped gowns, who carried baskets full of grapes on their heads!"

"Why, that's our Provence!" exclaimed Blanche, and clapped her hands.

"Then your Provence is a Paradise."

"It is indeed," said Madame Masmajour, softly, and she sighed.

"Well, if you should be in that salon you would never miss your Provence! You would feel just as though you were inside one of those little houses, and looking out into the splendid sunshine and the quivering, hot air. On the fourth side of the room, there was no wall, but only a window in three parts that from top to bottom was covered with climbing plants ; and among the leaves there seemed to be great green and blue and gold fire-flies ; they were tiny electric

lights in the form of fire-flies, hung on gilded chains and wires that you could hardly see among the leaves. Against one of the walls there stood a piece of furniture—I have never seen anything of the kind before. It was like a high altar, and it was like a choir-stall, and it was like a cabinet in a museum. On each side there were places for porcelains and bronzes and ivories and in the middle there was a round-arched niche with a seat, on which lay a blue cushion. The baroness made mamma sit down in this niche; and she looked like a beautiful saint, under a baldacchino."

"How fortunate rich people are," murmured Madame Masmajour.

Elsa told of the toilettes and jewels of the ladies, of the personal appearance of the guests, and of the performers, of the kindness of the baroness, of the age and ugliness of the baron. But of Brünne-Tillig, she said not a word. When his name came to her lips, she would not speak it, she knew not why. Henneberg she forgot to mention, because really she had scarcely seen him at all. She had not thought of him till Adèle inquired if he were there, and blushed as she spoke; though this was quite unnoticed by Elsa.

"Oh yes, he was there. But he didn't care anything about me."

"Whom did he care about, then?" Adèle went on.

"I really did not notice," Elsa said, laughing. "I don't remember seeing him with any lady. He paid no attention to anybody but the baroness, I think."

"They seem to be great friends," Madame Masmajour remarked. And Adèle again crimsoned to the roots of her hair, and bent her head over the flowers which she was at the moment arranging upon a hat.

Then Elsa related that, at the desire of the baroness, she was to send a picture to the Salon, although the time for sending was already past.

"A foreigner has many advantages in our country," Madame Masmajour remarked.

"But mother," cried Blanche, reproachfully, "Elsa is just as much a Parisian as anybody."

"I did not mean Elsa, but madame la baronne."

"But the baroness is French, too, by marriage," Blanche persisted, dogmatically.

"I know what I mean," Madame Masmajour rejoined, and said no more.

But Elsa was grieved to be twitted about a favour which she had not sought, which had been forced upon her, and, indeed, was not yet at all a certainty. Her feeling showed itself in her manner and was observed by Madame Masmajour, who laid her hand tenderly on the girl's shoulder and said: "You must not be offended, my dear. It was through foreigners that we lost our fortune."

"And from foreigners we are earning another," Blanche rejoined.

"Not much of a fortune as yet," said Madame Masmajour. But her sad face grew a little brighter at her daughter's words.

"I am not offended, Madame Masmajour," Elsa replied; "I should probably feel hurt also, if I saw foreigners making a great display in my country. But it is your own fault, here in France; why are you so attractive that strangers from all countries in the world come to you, and will not go away?"

Madame Masmajour kissed Elsa, and Adèle caught her hand and gave it a squeeze. "You are just as bright as you are kind," the girl said, "we don't look upon you as a foreigner."

"We look upon you as a sister," cried Blanche impetuously, and smiled at Elsa with her brilliant dark eyes.

"What are you going to exhibit?" Madame Masmajour asked.

Yes, that was the question. Elsa had many things ready, but they all seemed to her cold and commonplace; in a word, like the work of a pupil. Only one thing that she had done was, in a degree, satisfactory. But—would Adèle consent? For this one thing was—the pastel portrait of her friend which she had made not long before.

"My picture?" cried Adèle. "You are not thinking of that! It could not possibly be interesting."

"You'll get no compliments from me, you little coquette!"

Blanche declared that it was a most successful picture, and that Elsa would certainly get a prize for it.

"There are no rewards given at the Salon of the Champ de Mars," Elsa explained; "the only prize is the recognition of the artists."

Madame Masmajour said a few words of encouragement to Elsa about sending the pastel; after which she returned to her *brandade*. Blanche rejoiced that her sister was to shine in the Salon. "We shall all go to admire! You will see, some prince will fall in love with you, and will appear suddenly, one of these days, to carry you off."

"Be silent, you crazy thing!" Adèle said; but she gave her consent that her portrait should go to the Salon.

The same day the pastel was sent to Pierre. Elsa declared that she expected nothing, but that she had a little hope, however, because it had been a work of love, and she felt that it was not altogether a failure. After two days of impatient waiting, she received two lines from the baroness: "My congratulations, dear Fräulein, and cordial greetings to your dear family!" accompanying a note to herself from Pierre, saying that his own urgency, against serious difficulties, had succeeded in getting the very graceful work of her young protégée accepted, and that he considered himself fortunate in having had the opportunity to prove to madame la baronne his complete devotion. Elsa hastened with this welcome message to the Masmajours, where the good news was received with equal delight.

It was decided that they should all go to the Salon together on Varnishing Day. They had never seen a Salon before; the preceding year, they had been still too unsettled and felt themselves really too poor, to think of any such gratification. The girls received it as a token that they had now become true Parisians,

since they were to visit the Salon on a Varnishing Day and Madame Masmajour promised herself much advantage in her work from the new ideas to be obtained by an observation of the ladies and of the pictures.

On the Sunday preceding the opening of the Salon, Henneberg came for a moment to invite the Koppels to that breakfast on the Eiffel Tower which, for the artists and their nearest friends, is the regular institution, the indispensable complement of Varnishing Day at the Champ de Mars Salon, as breakfast at Ledoyen's is for the Salon of the Champs-Élysées. Koppel himself could not accept, for he had an engagement that day which would even prevent him from accompanying his wife and Elsa on their first visit to the latter's picture. Frau Käthe had a feeling that it would not be quite proper for her to go with Henneberg without her husband, and she excused herself on the ground that they were not to go alone, but with their neighbours, the Masmajours.

"But I know the Masmajours," Henneberg protested, "I will invite them also."

Upon this, Frau Käthe could no longer refuse, especially when Elsa begged with her coaxing eyes; and the mother inquired only if the baroness were to be of the party.

Henneberg glanced keenly at Frau Käthe, as she asked this question, but he at once perceived that it was entirely innocent and without concealed meaning. "Oh, no," he replied, carelessly. "The baroness loathes a crowd. If the baron did not make it a point that, several times in the season, she should have really large receptions, she would have had Parsifal performed the other night for only herself and four or five friends." He begged permission to write, on the spot, the invitation for the Masmajours, and Frau Käthe agreed to take charge of its delivery.

Madame Masmajour coloured violently when Henneberg's invitation was brought her, and without a moment's thought exclaimed: "Impossible!" Frau Käthe and Elsa, however, urged the matter strongly

upon her, and Frau Käthe took occasion to make the remark that, on her first venture before the public, Elsa naturally desired to have her friends around her; the baroness would not be there; and it would be a great disappointment if the Masmajours should also fail her. Upon this, Madame Masmajour decided to go. But she remained much disturbed in mind after the neighbours had gone up stairs. The feeling of social equality which so far had made intercourse with the Koppels easy for her, and even had allowed her to say to herself that, as a Frenchwoman, she really stood higher than these foreign Barbarians, was rather unsettled since she had worked for the baroness, and had gone, as a milliner, with band-boxes and bills into the same house which the Koppels visited as beloved and honoured guests.

Varnishing Day brought a surprise. When Frau Käthe and Elsa, accompanied by the whole Masmajour family, early in the forenoon, sought in the still comparatively empty Salon for Elsa's pastel, it was a long time before they could find it. Blanche, with delighted outcry, was the first to make the discovery. Elsa had gone past it twice without seeing it, for, whereas she had sent it to Pierre framed in a very cheap little narrow gilt moulding, it now appeared with a frame of old-gold plush, upon which lay carelessly, beneath the portrait and on its left, great sword-lilies in enamel, the stems and leaves and flowers all in their natural colouring. Thus flower-surrounded, the delicate, girlish face with its colourless cheeks, its straight nose, its fine, rather thin lips, and its serious, dark eyes, vaguely suggested an Ophelia, or some innocent, unhappy maiden of legend; and the glass over the frame even enhanced this impression of unreality, for it shut the young face out of everyday life, as if it were beneath some pellucid water, as if it were some sea-maiden, and added to the delicate, yet brilliant pastel colouring a shimmer as of a butterfly's wing in the sunshine.

Masmajour was really overpowered, and lavished most enthusiastic praises upon Elsa for her remarkable talent. Madame Masmajour stood still and gazed un-

till her eyes were full of tears. For, made clear and intense in the expressive portrait, all the charms and distinction of her child's nature became visible to her as never before, and it was a cruel pang to remember that the exquisite original of this picture was now only a poor little milliner working for loud-voiced, fat mulatto women. Blanche was enraptured, and exclaimed—so loud that her mother was forced, by a resolute pressure of her arm, to bring her back to a consciousness of the time and place—"You look like a real princess! We don't see you like that every day."

Elsa was very much surprised; and could not tell whether the charm of the picture lay in her own work or in the wonderfully appropriate frame. Adèle herself was extremely embarrassed. She dared only to glance by stealth at the enchanting picture. It seemed to her that every passer-by looked at her, for the purpose of comparing her with her own reflection in the flattering mirror of art. She wanted to get away, and being told that they must wait for Henneberg, who was to find them just here, she turned her back to the hall that people might not look at her any more.

After a little delay, Henneberg appeared. He greeted the party, apologizing briefly, glanced at the picture, congratulated Elsa and Frau Käthe, and proposed that they should walk rapidly through one of the long halls and then adjourn to the Eiffel Tower.

"Who put the picture in that wonderfully beautiful frame?" Elsa asked, as soon as she had an opportunity.

Henneberg did not understand. "Is it not your frame?" he said.

Elsa told him the whole story. Henneberg let his monocle fall. He smiled. "That must be the baroness," he said. He remembered a remark that she had made to him a few days earlier. "Do you see," she had said, "how little power I have, after all? I should like so much to do something for the Koppels, and I find that I cannot. I do not dare to send them anything as a present; they would not accept it. Nor can I assist them in any way openly; malicious

tongues, that can no longer reach me, would attack them. Only stealthily and furtively can I do them any kindness." And she had betrayed the thought that was in her mind, when she added, smiling bitterly: "In my salon, a pretty woman can easily find an admirer, but a girl could never find a husband." Her wish to do something to please the Koppels, had doubtless prompted the graceful thought of giving Elsa's picture this uncommon frame.

Upon the Eiffel Tower, a table awaited the party, and a very luxurious repast had been ordered. Many famous painters, at neighbouring tables, were personal friends of Henneberg, and greeted him as he passed by. Some rose and shook hands with him, and interchanged a few words. During the merry breakfast, Henneberg spoke of these artists, pointed them out by name, and repeated, with the discretion which the presence of three young girls required, some of the current gossip of the studios. In the course of conversation, Henneberg said to Elsa: "Has it occurred to you to put a price on your picture, in case some one should wish to purchase it?"

"Oh! the picture is not for sale!" exclaimed Elsa, much surprised.

"But why not?"

"I could not sell the portrait of my friend! Of course it is hers." And she laid her hand tenderly on the arm of Adèle, who sat next her.

Henneberg was conscious that he had made a blunder. In fact, he had so carelessly noticed the picture, and Adèle herself, that he had not remarked at all that it was a portrait. He got out of it as best as he could. "Oh, certainly!" he said, "of course; I did not mean the picture itself, but if anyone wanted a copy, you would be willing, would you not?"

"I should have to ask Mademoiselle Adèle's permission," Elsa replied, and turned to her friend, who blushed violently and remained silent.

"Of course," Henneberg replied, bowing to Adèle; and so the matter dropped.

After breakfast the party remained about two hours longer in the Salon. Henneberg politely devoted himself to the mothers, and Masmajour faithfully watched over the girls. The equivocal element among the ladies, and the respectable contingent which appeared as if it were equivocal, the loud talk, the free use of opera-glasses, the extraordinary dress, appeared to Frau Käthe as scandalous in the highest degree. Madame Masmajour also—in the dust and heat and turmoil and the strong perfumes which floated around the ladies sitting down, or sailing through the halls—was far from comfortable; but she saw many novelties, and brought home from this visit to the Salon a boldness of originality which amazed her daughters, and enraptured her customers. Blanche and Elsa found much to laugh about. Adèle, on the contrary, was taciturn. She went along with them like one in a dream. She heard nothing of the noise and saw scarcely any of the pictures. She thought of one thing only, that Henneberg had wished to have her picture; and she teased herself with the question, why should he want it, and whether she should consent to Elsa's copying it for him.

Meanwhile Koppel had lost no time. On the day after the performance of *Parsifal* he wrote to Pfister to buy for him two hundred shares of Almaden. They had risen very much, since Pfister had first mentioned them to him. At that time he could have bought for 450 francs. Now he was ready to pay 530, but his order could not be executed at that price. Koppel followed the quotations pertinaciously for a whole week. At last he fixed as his purchasing price the closing quotation of the day before. The market was very strong the following day at the Bourse. Then he added 5 francs. But even then, he did not keep up with the market, which went higher by leaps. Koppel was restless, and feverishly excited. He could scarcely wait for the evening paper, and was bitterly disappointed when the report of the Bourse showed him that again nothing could have been done.

He caught himself unawares in impulses of wrath

against Henneberg. It could not be excused, the unfriendliness of the latter's conduct. Why did he not give in October some hint to Koppel of what was going on? It would have cost him neither money nor trouble. There was no need to give any full details as to plans. A word would have sufficed: "Friend Koppel, buy Almaden, and ask me no questions." At that time the shares were at 180 francs. They had now reached 570 francs. If he had bought two hundred shares at that time, he would to-day be 78,000 francs richer. This 78,000 francs Henneberg had actually taken out of his pocket. He was not far from saying: *stolen* out of his pocket.

Pfiester came again to see him, and he said: "Herr Doctor, do you know, when there is a very strong upward tendency and a man wishes to go in, it won't do for him to be anxious, and to fix his price. You would better give an unlimited order. You run no risk. Almaden will undoubtedly go to 1000 francs and higher still. If you had bought when I advised you, you would have already made 130 francs on a share."

Koppel appeared thoughtful; Pfiester only laughed at him. "At the Bourse you must never look back; only forward. When we remember that a few months ago Almaden was offered at 130, it seems dear, now, at 580. But when you consider that in a few months it will reach a thousand, then it seems cheap at its present price."

This was evident. Koppel hesitated but a few minutes longer, and then he said, "Very well. Buy me 200 Almaden, as advantageously as you can."

This time, his anxiety and excitement were greater than hitherto, because he had agreed to something indefinite and was helpless in the hands of the Bourse. But the Bourse did not specially maltreat him. With a sigh of relief, he received in the following afternoon a post-card from Pfiester, written on the spot, to say that he had been able to buy Almaden for 585.

When Koppel went to the *coulissier* at the next half-monthly settlement (on which occasion he found

himself the loser of an inconsiderable sum), Pfister happened to be there, and began talking with the *coulissier*. He related, laughing, that a customer had sold certain securities and wished to buy them back at the next quotation. He had executed the order at 778 francs, and half an hour later the thing had dropped to 710.

"How many shares?" asked the *coulissier*.

"Five hundred," was the answer.

Both laughed, louder than before; and the *coulissier* remarked: "Your customer got caught!"

Koppel was indignant as he thought over this conversation on his way homeward. Here was a man who had lost 30,000 francs, and these hardened brokers took it as an excellent joke! Into such ruffian hands a man falls, when he speculates! He was also shocked when he thought of the danger he had blindly incurred in giving Pfister an order without limit of price, and he promised himself that he would never forget this day's experience.

In the few following days, luck played with him as a cat does with a mouse. There came a lull in the fluctuations of Almaden. The price varied in all only 5 or 10 francs, remaining at about 585. One day Koppel would be 1000 or 2000 francs richer, and the next day, poorer by as much. "Patience! patience!" he said to himself, twisting between his fingers the paper which made known to him that another day had passed at the Bourse and that he was not at all advanced. And suddenly, after the sultry stillness there came a storm. The price—dropped, more rapidly than it had gone up! Almaden lost 20 to 30 francs. The newspapers attacked the quicksilver syndicate. They called upon the government to interfere against a "corner" like this. They announced that, in the Chamber, inquiry would be made. They had information that an important mine had broken loose from the ring; that a new discovery had superseded the use of quicksilver in the extraction of gold; and so on. In the turn of a hand Almaden had dropped to 550; then, to 500; then, it had even fallen below that,

Koppel had already lost from 15,000 to 18,000 francs. He saw with terror that at the end of the month, he should have to sell his wife's securities. An agonized feeling of helplessness came over him. Was it, then, impossible to protect himself? Must he, defenseless, like a stupid sheep, be torn in pieces by the wolves and jackals of the Bourse? Could he do nothing to rescue his property from their greedy, outstretched hands? And who could assure him that prices had even yet touched bottom? Perhaps this was only the beginning. Not very long ago, Almaden had been 180 francs. What if it should fall again to 180? It might even go lower than that. Then he would lose, at one stroke, all that he possessed. These thoughts assailed him with importunity the night after Almaden had fallen to 480 francs. He could not sleep, but tossed in restless fever upon his bed. His imagination called up ghosts which filled him with terror. Almost insane with anxiety, he came to the decision to save what could be saved. Overboard with the fatal Almaden! Sell, before the ruin is completed! Then came another thought: why not meet the Bourse with its own weapons, and recover what it had already snatched from him? Why not follow the downward movement? To be obstinate, in a case like this, was absurd. When a man speculates, he must not swim against the current. To shift your sail according to the wind is the main virtue; it is, indeed, the only one. As with the sailor, this is not a lack of character but, clearly, skill and good sense. That is what he must do, then: sell his own Almaden, and sell twice or thrice as much more; then, the loss would be made good; or even it might be changed to gain. He was in a flutter of impatience; he felt as if he must immediately rise, and communicate the order. It required an effort of the will and the reason to convince him that there was nothing he could do in the night, and that he was not losing time, since the Bourse did not open till noon of the next day. And so he remained in bed. But the impulse to act without delay, and the restraining force of his reason, continued to struggle

within him, so that it was not until morning that, completely worn out with these mental conflicts, he fell into brief and unquiet slumber.

When he awoke, he was extremely fatigued and depressed, and again things assumed a new aspect. The peril was perhaps not so urgent. He must not be too precipitate. Why not first ask advice from Henneberg? Oh, no. Not from him. A feeling, which he scarcely justified in his own mind, while at the same time it was very decided, prevented him from taking Henneberg into his confidence. Henneberg must not know that he was speculating. In respect to Kohn the case was different; and to Kohn Koppel went, as soon as his classes were over at school, seeking him in his place of business in the rue Vivienne. Kohn was surprised to see his visitor, but was, as usual, very friendly.

"What is the trouble?" Koppel asked, almost without any previous leading up to the subject. "Why has Almaden gone down like mad?"

"Let it fall," answered Kohn cheerfully.

"That article in the paper about the collapse of the syndicate?"

"Oh, that is only talk!"

"There is no need of anxiety then?"

"We are tranquil."

"Should one buy?"

"A wise man buys when things are cheap, and sells when they are dear."

Kohn's contented equanimity made a great impression upon Koppel.

"You take a weight off my heart," he said.

"Excuse me if, in turn, I ask you a question; are you interested?"

"Well, yes," Koppel confessed. "Since our talk I have bought a little Almaden. It's not of great importance, but one does not like to lose."

"Oh, you will not lose. The attacks in the papers are only brigandage. And they are not aimed at us. It is only in the interest of the speculators. And I know who will pay the costs of that campaign."

Koppel thanked Kohn with involuntary warmth, and hastened at once to Pfister. All anxiety had fled from his mind, his confidence was again restored. Without much reflection he ordered Pfister to buy 400 more Almaden at 480 francs.

"Bravo!" Pfister said, as he received the commission, "that is the way to work! You are the stuff that millionaires are made of."

Koppel's order checked the falling movement; but after two days of indecision the price began again to fall, though less rapidly, and went down to 460. Koppel followed breathless. He had now lost over 33,000 francs. Had Kohn been mistaken, then? Or had he deceived him? Were the opponents of the ring more powerful, perhaps, than Henneberg and his host? His confidence was fast vanishing, when suddenly a new leaf was turned. Without any transition, Almaden in a single day sprang with wild leaps (after it had stood at 455 and had slumped to 447.50) to over 480, and continued to rise with equal rapidity in the succeeding days.

The attacks in the newspapers ceased at once, and there appeared, on the contrary, communications about the brilliant profits which the Almaden company, some other quicksilver companies, and the French-Oriental Bank would shortly divide among their stockholders.

The battle was won. At the end of the month, the compensation quotation of Almaden was 522.50. Instead of paying anything, Koppel received about 4,000 francs, and from this time forward almost every day's Bourse gave him a profit of from 3,000 to 6,000 and sometimes, even, of 10,000 francs. He was very well satisfied with himself. The torturing excitement of the critical day and night were almost forgotten. He remembered only that, in a dangerous position, he had showed firmness of character, circumspection, and a capacity for bold and sudden decision; and he said to himself in good faith: "I had no idea what there was in me. It is an advantage to come into circumstances

of peril, which enable a man to see the usually hidden foundations of his own nature." Courage could be shown in other ways than on battle-fields. Pfister said truly: he was of the wood from which are hewn millionaires; he deserved to be rich, for he had had the boldness to snatch for himself profit from out the maddest havoc of a Bourse battle.

The thoroughness to which his profession had trained him showed itself in this new pursuit. He bought the annual issue of a Handbook of Finance for a series of years, which gave the fluctuations of the securities which had been sold at the Bourse, their quotations on settling-days, the Report, and so on. He subscribed to the official *Côte de la Bourse* and to several financial papers. He plunged himself into this peculiar literature, which for him had a greater charm than his classics. He believed that he had deduced from it a collection of unassailable general truths. All prices repeat themselves at the Bourse! Often, it is true, after long years and wide fluctuations. Persistence, therefore, is really the secret of success in speculation, and a man cannot lose who has the patience to wait long enough. It is true, many securities disappear entirely out of the Handbook. It is true the book has a supplement giving a list of bankrupt companies and corporations, a graveyard of dead and buried securities. But these always had had the sign of death upon their brow. A man must be a fool to take an interest in such things. And even with these failures money could have been made if a man had been sagacious enough to foresee their downfall and act accordingly.

Now questions arose in his mind, with which he had never before concerned himself. He was, undoubtedly, on the way to wealth. How far would he follow this way? Where lay his objective point? How should this be determined? In his meditations, he shaped his future. At the present time, he was spending between eight and nine thousand francs; but he lived very frugally. He desired to raise this level in some degree. Also, he must do something

for his children. Society for Elsa, the University for Oscar; this required an income of at least 15,000 francs. And this was really too scanty. Let us say 20,000 francs, so that one can now and then enjoy a journey, theatres, concerts, some little romantic incident, a certain freedom of action; so that one can really live the life of a civilized human being. In order to have an income of 20,000 francs from good securities, which, for investment, he would select with the greatest care, there would be needed about 500,000 francs, or perhaps, somewhat more. To Elsa, he would give 100,000 francs as dowry. Add to this, the provision for a suitable refurnishing of the house, and something always at command, a sort of working capital, and the sum would thus reach to about 700,000 francs or, 625,000, with his wife's inheritance. It was not much, after all, but he would be satisfied with little. He had never desired luxury. In prosperity he would be on his guard against ostentation.

He had now six hundred Almaden, which had cost him, on an average, 515 francs. That the shares would rise to 1,000 francs, he felt sure. After deduction of all expenses, this secured him a profit of from 270,000 to 280,000 francs; and with this, he was well on towards his goal!

He now made a mental calculation, and decided that he must buy at once 400 more Almaden. For these he had to pay at the rate of 550 francs. But he would not allow himself to be scared off. He had now 1,000 shares, at an average cost of 530 francs; it was his expectation to gain from them 430,000 or 440,000 francs. The calculation was not always exactly the same. Furthermore, he must not derive his entire harvest from one single transaction. Slow and sure. If it took him two or three years to make his 700,000 francs, that was no matter; and he was pleased with himself, to find that success did not turn his head, that he remained moderate, cool; sensible, reasonable and prudent.

He now took his 20,000 francs income for granted, and dreamed further. How should he organize his

future life? At once, of course, he would give up Wolzen, and he would no longer have the annoyance of private pupils. Home to Berlin? Again into the socialistic movement? There was a good deal against this. To be publicly identified with it involved worry and vexation. It required sacrifices of all kinds, even of one's own self-respect, for often it was necessary to obey the will of others, to have consideration for whims and prejudices of the multitude, to submit to harsh discipline, and even to fight against intrigue and wickedness. And with what result? The future condition of Socialism was so far distant, that it looked extremely vague and visionary, when one was really candid with oneself about it. The life of the individual is too short for any man to hope to see realized the romantic ideal of a new, equitable, fraternal business-system. When he really scrutinized himself carefully, it might be that his desire to play a rôle in politics was pure vanity. Had he a right to gratify his own selfishness, to think only of that which would give him pleasure, and solely on his own account? He had children. It was a worthy use of a man's whole strength, a father's, to train children for a nobler life and to secure them a happier lot on earth, than their parents' had been.

And, moreover, who could be sure that a return to Berlin would be the most expedient thing? His mother was now accustomed to the milder climate of Paris. It might perhaps shorten her days, were he to take her back to the severe Prussian winters. Paris, no doubt, had its advantages when a man had the means to enjoy them. But this question he would not decide alone. Käthe's opinion must also be regarded. He went no deeper into that subject, and occupied himself next in thinking what direction he would give to his existence. On this point he was not entirely clear. His purposes varied. At one time he abandoned himself to the idea of a long, delightful journey, of slow, appreciative wandering through art galleries, of luxurious reading in vast libraries; then he thought of some ambitious work, which would create for him a

great object in life. After all, who could determine the future? He was now but forty-four years old; he felt himself still young in mind and temper, and receptive towards any impulse. New, free, and broad conditions of existence might unfold in him a new life, capable of fruit and flowers hitherto unthought of.

In the midst of these dreams, the mangy pelt that he had once bought, which he daily beheld, but which for years he had not noticed, gained a new significance for him. The materialization of all his castles in the clouds had become such a matter of certainty to him that he lived and moved in them, as between walls and under a roof, and he asked himself in all seriousness whether he was now any happier than he had been before. And he decided, with a mild wisdom, not untinged with sadness, that in reality all things were vanity, that the pelt preached an immortal truth, that its story was repeated in great events as well as small. "On the day," he said to himself, "when I possess my 20,000 francs income, I shall be perfectly conscious that it was scarcely worth wishing for, that it by no means repays the excitement and effort expended in gaining it."

In the second half of May, Elsa's birthday occurred. Frau Käthe proposed to celebrate the occasion with unusual festivities, for the child was now entering upon the decisive years of her life; she had within the last few weeks become quite a personage, who was beginning to be known, whose name had been mentioned in many papers with words of praise for the talent which her pastel exhibited. The *Vigil de la Presse* had hastened to send voluntarily to the address indicated in the Salon catalogue, the notices of her work which had appeared, and Elsa had learned to enjoy her fame, as she opened the yellow envelope which contained the clippings, and her own name, underlined with a blue pencil, met her eyes. Frau Käthe thought of an excursion into the country to which the Masmajours should be asked; or they might be invited to supper and then to the theatre.

Koppel agreed with delight to the idea, but at once

made it more extensive. He desired to invite also Henneberg, and Brünne-Tillig (who had paid his visit); and he added the question whether the Agostinis might not also be included. Frau Käthe was greatly shocked, and said he could not be serious. How could he suggest to her such obtrusiveness? he would cause her the humiliation of the baron's refusing, or perhaps not even taking the trouble to reply. Also she made objections in respect to Brünne-Tillig; he was a very amiable young man, courteous and unassuming; but he moved in the highest circles, and would consider her repast and the way it was served and her dining-room, as countrified in the extreme. Even Henneberg she pitilessly objected to, because she was not sure that he still took pleasure in the every-day modest hospitality that she could offer him. Koppel gave up the Agostinis; but he stood firm in respect to Henneberg and Brünne-Tillig; and said that if the house was too humble, they could entertain their guests at a restaurant as was often done in Paris.

"But never except by bachelors, who have no home of their own," Frau Käthe said, quite offended; and she would hear no more of that. Then Koppel proposed to order the supper, and to hire, for the occasion, all the china and silver; one could then have them as elegant as one pleased,—good enough for any guest, to whatever society he was accustomed.

"Doesn't it go against you," Frau Käthe remonstrated, "to deceive guests with a hired display?"

"We hire it for a time, until we have our own," Koppel said, without thinking; the astonished look of his wife made him conscious that he had betrayed himself, and he hastened to get over his indiscretion as best he could.

When in the afternoon of Elsa's birthday, appeared before the door the wagon of the caterer from whom Koppel had ordered the repast, and the cook and the kitchen-boy in their white professional attire, with their flat white caps, took out of the wagon and carried upstairs to the Koppels' apartment the baskets

and boxes containing the silver, the china, the bottles of wine, the partly prepared food, and the various cooking utensils, some of the little neighbours and most of the servants gathered in the room of the concierge to talk the matter over with the Knecht family. Knecht himself had extracted from the Koppels' maid the information that she had heard something said about an inheritance ; and the assembly below stairs took this information of the concierge's as a starting-point for very wide conclusions concerning important family events that were taking place at the Koppels'.

Vexation and excitement at present prevailed there. The old lady was indignant at the strangers who invaded her kitchen, flung aside the usual pots and pans, took possession of the fire, upon which they threw charcoal regardless of expense, set up their own cooking utensils, treated the place as a conquered country, and gave orders to the maid. She endeavoured to resist this usurpation, and to take command of the cook, but inasmuch as he could not understand a word she said, and found her in the way, in the rather small kitchen, he simply put her out ; smilingly, it is true, but with decision. She complained bitterly to Frau Käthe, who made answer : " To-day we are not the masters in our own house. In Paris, that is the way."

" I wish I had never seen Paris !" grumbled the old lady, and sat sulking in a corner, where Elsa in vain sought to appease her. She was so displeased that she pleaded fatigue, and went to bed early, not to be at the table.

At supper-time appeared a waiter, in evening coat and white woolen gloves, who inspected the apartment before his duties began, and whose disdainful and derisive mien distinctly enough showed the opinion that he had formed of the parlour and dining-room. Frau Käthe at once observed the expression of his eyes and his mouth, and had to put severe restraint upon herself not to send him away. " To pay one's good money for the purpose of being sneered at by such a fellow as that—excuse me !" she bewailed her.

self to Koppel, who replied : " I trust you have no special ambition to be appreciated by a waiter ! " Against the scorn of this menial Koppel was defended by the consciousness that he had made, or shortly would have made, over 50,000 francs ; and by the reflection that he laughs best who laughs last.

At table, notwithstanding Koppel's contented mood there seemed to be no real sociability. Monsieur Masmajour was dignified and reserved, as he always was in the presence of Germans. Madame Masmajour, according to her usual custom, was silent and civil ; Adèle, timid and dreamy ; Blanche, lively and excited, but in some degree repressed by the presence of Henneberg and Brünne-Tillig. On the other hand, it was a restraint to the German element of the party that the conversation, as a matter of politeness, was carried on in French. To the men, this was, it is true, of very slight consequence ; but Frau Käthe was far from fluent in her French, and she felt conversation in a foreign tongue with Henneberg, and with her own husband and children even, to be something unnatural. Hence resulted embarrassing pauses, for which it appeared that Henneberg's unusual taciturnity was largely responsible.

He was out of sorts and bored. Every few minutes he asked himself : *Que diable vais-je faire dans cette galère ?* When, eight months before, Koppel and he had unexpectedly met, the surprise of the moment and his old friend's gratification had perhaps led him into warmer expressions of pleasure than his inmost feelings dictated. In Koppel's home, he had always, it is true, felt a certain warmth at his heart, in living over again a portion of his youth, whose bitterness, mitigated by the satisfactory present, was reduced to a soft and pensive self-commiseration. Then came the dreadful day when Frau Koppel was lost for so many hours, and he had shared in his friend's extreme distress. Nothing brings men nearer to each other than a shared emotion, whether painful or pleasurable. On that day, and during the weeks that followed, he had honestly felt himself to be Koppel's friend, with a

mixture of self-flattering, protecting superiority. Perhaps also it was a secret pleasure to him to be admired, in his present splendour as a titled millionaire, by this very Koppel who had known him in his darkest hours, though so base a feeling he would not have acknowledged to himself. On this particular evening, the old charm was cruelly broken. Instead of the modest German homeliness, which had made him so much at home, he now saw before him the fictitious splendour of hired plate, whence obtained, his eye, (experienced in the secrets of Parisian life) could at once tell. Instead of the simple German food, whose taste had made him feel ten years younger, there was now set before him the sauce hollandaise, the filet, the *pâté-de-foie-gras*, and the fruit-ice of the ordinary boulevard restaurant. At the same time, the peculiarly tranquillizing atmosphere of strict integrity, regular and diligent work, and a wise content with a narrow yet peaceful lot which had been to him a certain relaxation, and had almost excited his envy, he no longer found; he remarked with uneasiness, that the master of the house again began talking about finance and the Bourse, and manifested a desire to draw him out on the subject of the quicksilver syndicate. The suspicion dawned upon him that Koppel was speculating. This threw him into profound meditation; of hangers-on, who sought to share in his successes, he had enough. He felt himself far too good to throw away his evenings on people of that stamp. He had done this Koppel far too much honour; he would now drop him. For the sake of the old lady, and of Frau Käthe, in whom he took a great interest, and for the sake of Elsa, he could but hope that his intercourse with the family would have done them no harm.

It happened oddly enough that Frau Käthe suddenly broke in upon these hostile thoughts of Henneberg's, by saying: "Do you know that your appearance in this house has produced a great deal of disturbance?"

"How is that?" asked Henneberg, almost embarrassed.

"You have awakened unhappy love and longing in a human heart."

Adèle looked across at Frau Käthe, involuntarily shocked, and the glance did not escape Blanche. But Frau Käthe smiled, and continued: "You remember, perhaps, the street-singer, who accompanied himself with the fiddle, and also danced; and to whom you threw out two francs? The poor fellow cannot forget you. He is perpetually coming, since that day, and plays and sings, and looks up at our windows as Blondel looked to the tower where his king was a captive. But he sighs in vain for you, and goes sadly away. The *sous* that we give him are no compensation for the lost prince, who appeared to him once and has never been seen again. Still we feel that he has not given up all hope of your re-appearance."

"This devotion is touching, and deserves reward," Henneberg said. "I should be delighted to leave a little money here for him, if you would take the trouble to throw him out a coin when he comes."

"Would it not be simpler if I should tell him where you live?" Frau Käthe asked, somewhat craftily. Blanche laughed aloud, and Henneberg rejoined, bowing: "You always know the right thing to do, Frau Käthe."

After supper, Elsa and Brünne-Tillig played a sonata of Beethoven, arranged for four hands; when this was ended, at the urgent request of the guests she brought out her portfolio of sketches, which were greatly admired. The party broke up at rather an early hour. After every one was gone, the cook appeared in the salon, asking if Koppel had been content with the service. Koppel paid him, and added two gold pieces as *pourboire* for himself and the others. When the cook had disappeared, Frau Käthe clasped her hands. "Forty francs!" she exclaimed. "This makes the supper cost us 150 francs!" Koppel had told her that the caterer's charge was 10 francs a plate. In truth, however, it was 30. He patted her head, smiling, and said to her: "This is our Elsa's eighteenth birthday, you know, and we ought not to mind a little

extravagance. And we got our money's worth, I think." But to himself he said: "The dear soul will have to be educated, in some way, out of her narrow ideas."

On the following day, when Elsa went downstairs to see her friends, it seemed to her there was a certain reserve in their manner which made a stranger of her. They answered only in monosyllables, they said nothing of their own accord, but were silent when she ceased talking. She was hesitating whether to inquire what all this might mean, when Blanche suddenly revealed it with her usual liveliness.

"We are more frank than you foreigners," she said. "If I were betrothed, I should tell you."

"What are you talking about?" cried Elsa, amazed, and the colour came into her face.

"Why, you! You little fraud! You won't confess even now!"

"But, I assure you—I don't know what you mean—how disagreeable of you!" Elsa stammered, and her eyes filled with tears.

Blanche embraced her wildly. "Forgive me, Elsa, I would not do anything to offend you! Then it is not true?"

"How came you to think of such a thing?" the other said.

Then Madame Masmajour took up the matter seriously. "Here in France," she said, "it is not the custom to invite a young man to the house before he has declared himself, and been accepted by the parents. But we must remember that in Germany different customs prevail."

Elsa refused to remain longer, though much entreated, and she went to her own room, where she was soon lost in reverie. What Blanche had said, like a gust of wind, had cleared the clouds and shadows from her mind. Brünne-Tillig's image came clear and bright before her mental vision, and for the first time she thought consciously that her destiny was perhaps coming towards her in the person of this blonde young man.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT CAME OF ASKING A FAVOUR.

WHEN Koppel returned from school in the afternoon of the following day, Knecht, the concierge, was standing at the door of his room, and seemed to be waiting to speak to him.

"Excuse me, Monsieur Koppel," he said, after saluting Koppel with the unusual courtesy of removing his embroidered velvet cap: "Would it be too much trouble for you to give me a minute?"

"By no means," said Koppel, kindly, and expected to be asked to enter the room. But the concierge had other views. "Not here, if you please," he said; "this place is like a bee-hive, with perpetual going in and out. If you will allow me, I will go upstairs with you."

The very serious and extremely respectful tone of the usually so patronizing giant, caused surprise to Koppel and, also, curiosity. He invited the concierge to come up with him; and, on entering, after he had kissed his mother and Frau Käthe, and had patted Elsa on her round cheek, he passed through into his little study, where he asked Knecht—whom the women had followed with inquiring glances—to take a seat. The man seated himself in an embarrassed way on the edge of the chair, turning his cap round and round in his powerful hands, and began, hesitatingly: "You might do me a great favour, Monsieur Koppel."

Koppel looked at him in surprise; the concierge was speaking in German. This he had never done before, or at least never to Koppel or his wife; the utmost he had deigned, had been, now and then, when nobody was near, to say a few German words to the old lady.

The concierge remarked the effect he had produced, and continued, with an embarrassed air and yet a tone of sincerity:

"German is my mother-tongue, and when I was in the Hundred Guards, we spoke every kind of patois in the squadron. We were almost all of us men from the country. What I have to ask you is this. We have a distant cousin, a good fellow; he is an Alsatian, too. He is fond of our Marie, and he wants to marry her. You have known Marie from a child. It is nearly twelve years that you and I have been acquainted. Yes, yes, time goes; and the children become men and women. The young man is a lithographer. He served in the foreign legion. But there, a man can lay up nothing, you know, Monsieur Koppel. And now he would like to establish himself here in Paris. There is nothing doing in his part of the country. The Prussian competition has ruined it, they say. I can give no dowry to my girl. The times are so hard. Five children to feed, and things getting dearer every day. It was different under Napoleon. Then everybody had his chance—but this Republic! It is made for do-nothings. Honest people can't get a living. They must hide themselves. The little we had we lost in Panama."

"You, too, Herr Knecht?" exclaimed Koppel.

"Well, you know," said the concierge, apologetically, "it was always said that Panama was as good as Government bonds. And it was as good till the Republicans and the Jews ruined Monsieur de Lesseps! Jean—that is my future son-in-law's name—Jean has tried all he could, but so far he has got nothing. His captain interested himself for the fellow. He recommended him. My colonel promised he would do what he could. My colonel is a splendid man. He was like a father to us all. All of us of the Hundred Guards were like his own family to him. He got me this place as concierge. He would like to do something for Jean. But with these Republicans he has very little chance. They will give places to Communists and villains; but they'll do nothing for an honest lad who has served the country and has the Tonkin medal. And the Elsasser-Verein does what it can; but it has

too many to help. And so I thought I would speak to you, Monsieur Koppel."

"Very good. What is it that your young man would really like?"

"A place in an office of any kind. He writes a beautiful hand; he has had a good education, and he is not afraid of work. And honest—as pure gold! Let me tell you a little story about him. He is sitting on a bench in the Luxembourg, the other day; a man is near him who soon gets up and goes away, leaving a package on the bench. Before Jean has noticed the package, the gentleman is out of sight. Jean picks it up and brings it here. We open it, and there are heavy silver spoons and forks, and dessert spoons in silver-gilt, two dozen of each, at least eight pounds of silver! My wife says: 'Carry it to the police.' I say: 'Wait.' We look closer, and find a name, Dubois,—engraved. You know him, the great caterer in Faubourg Saint-Honoré. We look further, and there is the silversmith's bill, made out to M. Dubois for 725 francs.

"Then I say, 'Jean, you carry it to M. Dubois yourself.' Jean goes home; puts on his black coat and his hat, *comme il faut*, takes his package under his arm, and goes to Monsieur Dubois. He was a little early for dinner, six o'clock, and the waiters ask him, will he dine. 'No,' he says. 'I'll have some beer.' 'We don't have beer,' says the waiter. 'Well! then send me the *patron*.' The waiters look at him; Jean sits down and waits. The *patron* comes, and says: 'Sir, did you want to see me?' Jean laughs a little, and says: 'Excuse me, has anything happened to you to-day?' The *patron* looks hard at him, and says: 'What could have happened?' 'Have you lost anything?' says Jean. 'Yes!' screams the *patron*, 'we've lost some silver; do you belong to the police?' 'No,' says Jean, 'to the police I do not belong; but I—have found your silver!' And gives him the package. The *patron* opens it and counts the silver; it's all right. So he calls his head-waiter, who was the very man that lost it. He was happy; happy as a—sparrow!

Think of it, a man with a family, who would have had to bear the loss. Then they asked Jean who he was, and what his name was. And the waiter offered him money, but he would accept nothing, only a glass of wine, and a certificate, saying that he had brought back the silver. Oh, he's an honest fellow !"

"It does him credit. But what can I do for him?"

"You have grand friends, Monsieur Koppel. You even know Baron Agostini ——"

"How did you hear of that?" Koppel asked, surprised.

"Well! why should I not hear of it? Madame Masmajour works for the Frau Baroness, and she comes to see you, and you attend her soirées."

The concierge was indeed well informed, and it would have been in vain for Koppel to deny his grand acquaintances.

"If you would say a word to the Herr Baron! If he would take Jean into the bank. As office-clerk or as collector. We could soon find the security! If Jean could get the place we could have a wedding in the family at once!"

Knecht broke into a broad laugh, but still looked at Koppel with pleading eyes.

"You overrate my influence," Koppel said. "I do not know the baron at all, and I know the baroness but slightly. I assure you, our relations are not sufficiently close for me to ask any favours of them."

"It would be such a great thing for us," the concierge entreated; our Marie is so in love with Jean, and he with her. You know how it is yourself with young people. But if he has no situation, of course he cannot marry. Do it for the young folks, Monsieur Koppel. Jean is half a German, you know. He is an Alsatian."

Koppel smiled, involuntarily; and Knecht, who had noticed this, went on rapidly: "With me it is different. I came to Paris very young, and I served under the Emperor. I am a Frenchman. But since the war, our young folks go to the German school, and they become half Prussians. Yes, Monsieur Koppel, I am

a good Frenchman myself, but I am not like many. I don't detest the Prussians. I say, there are good people everywhere. When you first came into this house, and the police kept coming every little while to inquire about you, I always said : ' He is a very quiet gentleman, he goes about his work and troubles himself about nothing.' And I am not a partisan, myself. I have seen war enough ; I don't want to see any more. When the League of Patriots come to me, I always tell them that they and their General Boulanger will drive me away. The Republic will never get Elsass back again ; if we had an emperor, now ! But that is enough about politics. And so, Monsieur Koppel, be so kind as to say a word for Jean ! It would be such a favour ! "

" I tell you again I have no influence at all with Baron Agostini. But perhaps I can induce some one else who is a friend of mine and a friend of the baron's also, to speak a word in behalf of your future son-in-law."

" Be so kind, Monsieur Koppel. I am sure it will please you when you see the young folks driving to church. They are a handsome couple. It is not easy for the father of a family to get his children settled in the world. Pardon me for having troubled you."

The concierge rose, and very respectfully took the hand which Koppel extended to him. When he passed through the parlour, however, he had recovered all his usual majesty of demeanour, and holding himself so very erect that his head almost touched the low ceiling, he saluted the ladies with great dignity.

Koppel's account of his conversation with Knecht, excited great sympathy in Frau Käthe and Elsa. It would be charming if they could assist in bringing about the marriage of the pretty, slender, blue-eyed Marie ! They had had her before their eyes always—when, as a tiny girl she played in the courtyard with the grocer's cat from the shop next door ; when, grown a little older, she came home from school with a paper wreath on her flaxen hair and barbaric, gilt-bound prize-books under her arm, on the day of the prize distribution ; when, dressed in white, with long, white

veil, she had gone to confirmation ; when, finally, she was sent to learn her trade, and changed her short frocks for long ones, becoming a staid young person who, as the mother proudly narrated to the whole house, earned her three francs daily in retouching photographs at one of the great places on the boulevards. As a rule, it was Marie who brought up the letters and papers ; there would often be a little talk when she came ; and so it happened that she was better known to the Koppels than were the other members of the concierge's family. Urged on by his wife and daughter, Koppel set forth, on his next Thursday morning, in search of Henneberg, without waiting for the latter to make his party-call after the recent visit.

The outside door, and most of the window shutters of the upper stories, were shut ; and the house in the rue de Téhéran had a peculiarly ungracious look. To the neighbouring houses and to the street, it presented a hostile repellent face, and seemed to mutter to passers-by : " Go your ways ! I will have nothing to do with you." " The visitor rang the bell however and the house-door opened. On the threshold of his loge appeared the concierge, who, in his manner and in the cut of his beard, resembled a solicitor-general more than ever. He scrutinised Koppel coldly, then remembered that he had often seen him before and, somewhat mollified, asked : " Whom shall I announce ?"

" Doctor Koppel," the visitor replied and was about to go up but the concierge said : " Will you wait a moment. I do not know if monsieur le baron receives ;" and went to the speaking tube. There was no longer free access to Henneberg. It must be first inquired whether a guest would be received, or not. A whistle sounded ; the concierge lifted the tube to his ear ; then, after a minute he said : " Will monsieur go up, please."

Koppel went up the one flight of stairs leading to Henneberg's apartment. At the half-opened door of the anteroom a servant received him, and ushered him through the grand salon into the oriental salon on the left. The man desired him to be seated, and withdrew.

Koppel remained alone at least five minutes. Was Henneberg not yet dressed? On a June day, at eleven o'clock in the morning, that would be strange. Finally, the portière at the back of the room was pushed aside, and Henneberg, without haste, came in.

"I had to finish a letter," he said, and offered two fingers to Koppel. "To what do I owe this pleasure?"

No word of greeting, no excuse; only this extremely formal question. Koppel was amazed. But he replied, however, with undiminished cordiality. "First of all, the wish to see you, my dear Henneberg."

"And then?" Henneberg said, taking a seat near Koppel and screwing his monocle into his eye.

"Do I disturb you?" asked Koppel, now, at last, hurt, and was about to rise, but Henneberg perceived that he had been too curt, and, laying his hand on Koppel's shoulder, gently pushed him down again, saying: "No. Stay. I shall have my breakfast in half an hour. Won't you bear me company?"

"Lead not the father of a family into temptation," laughed Koppel. "You know that my people, hungry and thirsty, await me."

"How are the dear ladies?" Henneberg asked more cordially.

"Thank you. I come, in some degree, on an errand from them."

Henneberg cast a suspicious glance at him. He expected a new invitation and put himself in an attitude of defence.

Koppel narrated the case of Knecht and his prospective son-in-law and asked Henneberg if he would kindly say a word to Baron Agostini in the young man's behalf.

Henneberg twisted his brown moustache nervously, and wrinkled his brow.

"I should be very glad to oblige you," he said, "but pardon me if I tell you frankly that it would be disagreeable to me to annoy the baron about this thing."

"To 'annoy' is harsh."

"It is the word to use. You perhaps do not know

how eagerly the smallest position in the bank is sought for. Every director has his special protégé, and watches like the devil, when any place becomes vacant. If the baron were to make a position expressly for your man, he would have no end of a row with all the gentlemen of the board, who have their men to introduce. Agostini would probably rather give the value of a year's wages to anybody, out of his own pocket, than promise a place in the bank."

"The young fellow does not ask for alms."

"Doesn't ask for alms? You are mistaken. What else is it that he asks for? Is the place for which he begs anything else? The fellow is a lithographer, you say; he should stick to his trade. But no, he must get into an office, if only as the meanest servant; he must wear a uniform, lounge in an ante-room, read his sporting paper, and on the first of every month, get his wages without any trouble. I don't know why it is that we take an interest in such parasites."

"You are very severe upon parasites, my dear friend."

"And you are very mild, especially for a socialist."

"A socialist out of employment! Believe me, if I were in a position to overhaul the whole thing, I would take all the needed trouble to make every force do useful work and to make idleness intolerable. But so long as we cannot attack the whole structure, indulgence toward the individual does not seem out of place. And besides, who can decide, as things now are, who are parasites, and who are not?"

Koppel had perhaps, made this remark more emphatic than he was aware.

"Is your remark personal?" Henneberg said, with a contemptuous smile.

"What do you mean?" explained Koppel, all the more earnestly because he now first became conscious of the drift of his words.

"It is no harm, my son, for I have an answer." (The "son" was older by a year than the supercilious speaker.) "To make use of the nameless multitude for one's own ends is not living at others' expense. I

make a difference between parasites and those strong natures that you may call carnivora, if you like. The great cat, master in the forest, is a brain that wills and a paw that can. The parasite is a maw to be filled, and, especially, a sucker that desperately clings. The tiger schemes, lurks, leaps, gets what he wants and holds on to it: unless some one tears it from him. This is obvious?"

"Certainly. I have no desire, however, to go into the philosophy of this matter just now. All I care for is to give assistance to two young people who seem to me interesting."

"Why interesting?" asked Henneberg, raising his voice. "A young man who wishes to be registered as disabled for active service is really not interesting. I can see that you want to stand well with your concierge. That is 'the beginning of wisdom' for a Parisian tenant. But that can be effected more easily by the intelligent sacrifice of a twenty-franc piece, now and then. It is unnecessary to practice extortion upon old Agostini."

Koppel rose abruptly, took his hat, and said, coldly: "Pardon me that I have troubled you."

Again Henneberg felt a certain regret for having been so rude. He stretched out his hand towards Koppel, pulled him down a second time into his seat, and said, conciliatingly: "Come, you must not feel yourself ill-treated because I tell you honestly how things stand. It would be absurd if old friends should quarrel on account of a fellow whose very existence was unknown to me fifteen minutes ago. I seem to you hard, perhaps. But you do not allow yourself to think how constantly we are called upon for assistance, how we are exploited. If we did not defend ourselves they would really eat us up alive."

"To do good to our neighbours seems to me, however, to be the finest right that wealth confers."

"You talk like a book of devotions, my good Koppel. Some of the leaven of your early piety is working in you still. You have ceased, it is true, to believe in God, but you would like very much to play

the part of a small earthly Providence yourself. This flattering idea is seen to be vain when a man stands at a certain elevation from which he can overlook a great portion of humanity. With what right does your protégé claim that we should provide a soft bed for him? Without doubt there are thousands, there are millions who deserve it more than he does. Can we do anything for these millions? No. Then I don't see why we should favour the one, and not the millions that are more deserving."

"And so no man would ever help another man."

"Who ever helped you? Who me? So long as I was poor, no one did anything for me. Why should I now do anything for others?"

Koppel thought of the clergyman who assisted Henneberg and his mother in Berlin, and of the scholarships, by means of which Henneberg had obtained his education, but he only said: "You have become a frightful misanthropist, my poor friend. I believe that living all by yourself here in this great house, has something to do with it. Do you not hate wandering about here all alone, with four gruesome, empty stories over your head?"

"You are romantic beyond belief! To hear you talk, one would suppose this was an old castle, with mysterious corridors, and echoing halls, and a ghost set down in the inventory. The reality is quite different. I am extremely comfortable in this quiet, and every time I come up the stairs I rejoice anew that I am not meeting hordes, as formerly."

"But this satisfaction you could have in some pleasant little private house."

"Yes; if there were not the trouble of moving. There is this way out of it: I know I could go on a journey and leave the matter in charge of my steward, so that when I came back I should find everything settled in the new house. But for that, I must allow myself three months holiday, which I cannot do."

"Does the quicksilver business require your presence here?"

Henneberg again cast a suspicious side-glance at him, and replied :

"Any new machine must be watched for a time by its inventor."

At this moment, the *maitre d'hôtel* entered, and announced, without paying the least attention to Koppel :

"Monsieur le baron is served." The man was of the opinion that, with this visitor, there was no need of ceremony.

"And so you will not share my beefsteak with me?" Henneberg asked, as Koppel rose to go.

"Excuse me. And so I must give an unfavourable answer to my concierge?"

Henneberg merely shrugged his shoulders.

"It will be a great cause of regret to my wife."

"I should have been glad to please her, but it is really out of the question. Remember me to her all the same, please, won't you?"

On the way home Koppel's thoughts dwelt, as if spell-bound, upon his interview with Henneberg. What a change in this man! What hard-heartedness! What odious selfishness! The unfortunate fellow was on his way towards the *Cæsar-madness*! Yes; he had not been strong enough to bear the weight of his wealth! For the millionaire-existence was required a certain strength of character and mind which not every man possesses! "My millions will never make a Nero or a Caligula of me!" Koppel thought with self-satisfaction.

What he had to report called out from Elsa an expression of disappointment, while Frau Käthe remained, for a time, quite silent. After dinner, she said: "I do not know whether bachelors become bad men, or whether it is that bad men remain bachelors. But I am sure Henneberg could never have become such an iceberg if he had had a wife. I am afraid that we have done with him."

"Or he may have done with us. We will no longer throw ourselves at his head. This form of gratitude evidently is not to his taste."

Frau Käthe was, however, much disappointed, and her heart grew still heavier when the blonde Marie came up with the paper at noon and cast an anxious glance at her, with inquiring blue eyes. It had been told the girl the evening before that some steps would be taken the next morning in her behalf, and she now hoped to hear favourable news. Frau Käthe said only : "There has been nothing yet that we could do, my dear child, but we shall keep our promise."

"I should be so grateful to you, madame," said the pretty girl, and her eyes added to the words a very earnest, very persuasive appeal.

"Yes, we will keep our promise," repeated Frau Käthe, when the blonde Marie, still anxious, but partly consoled, had gone downstairs. "If the situation depends upon Baron Agostini, we should do better to bring our request to the baroness than to Dr. Henneberg."

"Is not that intrusive?" Koppel said ; "we scarcely know the lady well enough to ask a favour."

"It is not for ourselves that we ask it. And she has been so kind and friendly to us. As I understand her it would give her pleasure to oblige us and to do a kindness to a poor, good girl. Let us try it, dear Hugo."

"Well, if you are willing to undertake the affair, that is the best chance for success," Koppel said, and Elsa fondly kissed her mother's hand.

At the end of the month the Salon of the Champs de Mars would be closed, and the artists had to take away their work. This gave Frau Käthe and Elsa an opportunity to go to see the baroness. They had already sent her, through Henneberg, as long ago as the Varnishing Day, their thanks for the beautiful frame, and they now went to repeat the same in person. The frame was a costly object which must have a considerable money value. They naturally regarded it as lent and were intending now to send it back.

The baroness, who received them in the blue salon with the pictured walls, because she remembered how very much Elsa had enjoyed this room, was almost of-

fended at the idea of their returning the frame. How could they have had such an idea! She should think it most unfriendly if they did not keep it, as a little token of affection, and make no further talk on the subject.

"The picture does not belong to me, but to my friend," Elsa said, shyly. "The frame would not be mine, in any case."

"The picture could be taken out of the frame, of course," Frau Käthe said.

"Oh, no," replied the baroness, eagerly; "our young artist feels truly that the picture and the frame belong together. Return it to your friend just as it is. I will not say that your work was rendered any finer by its setting, but it needed a pretty toilette and it deserved one. I have examined your picture carefully. It is charming."

"That is the credit of the model."

"Certainly you made a good selection of a model; but you have represented her enchantingly. Who is this girl, with her refined, high-bred face?"

"Our little neighbour, the daughter of the milliner whom I took the liberty of recommending to you," Frau Käthe replied.

"Really? I must ask the woman to bring her daughter some time when she is coming. Yes, please; send the pastel as it is. Your friend will see herself looking very nice."

"Your kindness, Frau Baroness, encourages me to make a request in behalf of another little neighbour, who is almost as pretty," Frau Käthe went on, unabashed, and described the case of the blonde Marie and her fiancé.

The baroness listened attentively, and inquired into the circumstances of the Knecht family, and promised to speak to the baron. "Give me a few lines," she said, "in which there is summed up briefly all that I have to say about your protégé."

"Could I write it here?" Elsa said eagerly, carried away by her enthusiasm.

"Certainly," the baroness replied, smiling, and con-

ducted her guests into her boudoir, where stood her own writing-desk, with its morocco portfolio and ink-stand of engraved gold and enamel.

Elsa wrote out all that could recommend Jean, and when she had finished writing, yielding to a sudden roguish impulse, she drew with sure and rapid strokes of the pen, in the corner of the page, a little sketch of the blonde Marie. When the little trick was done, she became sober and very timid, and, blushed deeply, as she gave the page to the baroness. The latter was for a moment surprised, then laughed outright.

"And this is the young man's fiancée?" she said, examining the little sketch with interest. "That is the most effective thing that you could have done for him. Especially since the request is to be made to a man," she added rashly. She was instantly sorry to have said it. "I was not in earnest," she hastened to add. "Nobody will see the leaf but myself. We will do our best that this nice girl may bring a situation to the young man as her dowry."

Frau Käthe and Elsa could not find words enough to express their thanks, but the baroness interrupted them: "Since you have asked a little favour from me," she said, "I shall venture also to ask one from you."

"That is splendid! Please do, Frau Baroness," cried Frau Käthe, in great delight.

"This pastel pleased me so much that I have had the vanity to desire my portrait also, by the same artist. Are you willing, Fräulein?"

Frau Käthe was surprised and flattered; and a second time Elsa blushed to the roots of her hair. "It is too much honour," she stammered "I don't know—I have had so little experience—"

"But how will you get experience unless you avail yourself of opportunities to practice?" the baroness said, smiling. "But indeed you are quite too modest. Your friend's picture is a real jewel of poetic feeling, and the artists considered it also well done technically."

"A thousand thanks, gracious lady; you set me a

great task, but also one that I shall love. And I will try not to disappoint you too much. But—" and she hesitated to go on.

"But?" the baroness repeated.

"But—if I might venture to advise you, gracious lady—"

"Certainly, dear *Fräulein*," replied the baroness.

"I have the feeling that I could not make my picture strong enough, with chalks. For the character of your beauty, the pastel is not sufficiently authoritative; I think I could do better in aquarelle."

"That is an amiable way of telling me that you take me for a dragoon?"

"The picture will show what I take you for, gracious lady! That is, if I can do what I intend."

"I am willing it should be an aquarelle. So when shall we begin?"

"I am at your service, gracious lady. How would it be to-morrow?"

"Do you think that you can do it in two weeks?"

"I do not need as much time as that for sittings, if I can come every day."

"In the middle of July I shall leave Paris, and probably shall not return before the end of October."

It was decided that the sittings should be in the morning from ten o'clock until *déjeuner*, and that the *femme de chambre* of the baroness should come regularly for Elsa with the carriage, and should accompany her home at noon; and the mother and daughter took leave of the baroness in such a state of delightful excitement that they with great difficulty restrained themselves from embracing each other on the stairs, in the presence of the lackeys in their grand liveries.

The picture which the baroness ordered from Elsa, was destined for Henneberg. For the last two years he had never ceased to beg for a portrait. There was a bust of her by Martiny, which three years earlier had excited attention at the Salon; it was of tinted marble and jasper, the hair of opaque obsidian, with an Egyptian diadem of gold, gems and enamel; a re-

gal work, which now, on a pedestal of ebony and bronze, draped with cloth of gold, adorned the grand salon of *hôtel* Agostini. Henneberg had wished to order a replica of this; the baroness, however, objected, and to be quite secure, she bought from Martiny the sketch in colours and the plaster cast which he had retained in his atelier. As Henneberg begged in vain, he finally threatened her that he would have her picture painted without her knowledge, by some artist whom he had befriended, using a sketch made by stealth at some reception or dinner, or at the theatre, wherever the opportunity might offer, and with the aid of a snap-shot photograph, if need were. The baroness forbade him this strictly, but she knew Henneberg's obstinate will, and feared that in the end he would do as he wished. Then came to her, during the visit of the mother and daughter, the idea that Elsa could paint the portrait for Henneberg. So the gossip of the studios would be avoided, and it seemed to her that the gift would be an innocent one if it were the girl's work, and that Henneberg could have no warmer than friendly thoughts in the presence of a portrait which had come from such hands. Elsa would certainly not enquire what destination her work might have, and that Henneberg would jealously conceal it from all eyes but his own, the baroness could not doubt.

The sittings made a very deep impression upon Elsa. Looking back to them, and eagerly looking forward to them, filled her mind the whole day, and even her dreams by night. The baroness inspired in her an impassioned, girlish enthusiasm, and she flew to the rue Fortuny as to a trysting-place. In her loving conversations with the baroness, the germs of countless thoughts and feelings ripened within her as buds develop under the intense sunshine of a rapid spring; light came into the obscurity of her young soul where the shadows of childish dreams contended with the realities of first experiences of life; and many inclinations, ambitions and longings, of which she was, as

yet, scarcely concious, became suddenly distinct after she had thus given them utterance.

The work did not proceed so rapidly as Elsa had expected. She brought to the first sitting a distinct conception of the face which she was to paint: she saw a proud, lofty style of beauty, which exercised a powerful attraction, yet at the same time kept every one at a distance, with deep, mysterious eyes, an imperative mouth, and yet the brow, the nose, the rounded chin and cheek, of adorable loveliness; as a whole, a Juno, yet not without the hint of a Medusa behind the repose of the features. Now, however, as she was alone for hours with her sitter, in unrestrained conversation, she became aware, with bewilderment, that these dark eyes were soft and sad, that the firm mouth was capable of enchanting smiles, that a touching friendliness warmed and humanised the classic features into the face of a mother or a sister. An uncertainty which of these two ways of conceiving the portrait would be really the true one made Elsa at first insecure; she worked slowly and feebly; after two sittings, she destroyed what she had done and began anew. It was now her endeavour to reconcile the two phases of the nature, retaining all the cold, classic gravity of the face, and yet indicating that a golden sunshine many a time flooded the austere landscape. This also failed; perhaps it was, for her, too hard a task; perhaps it would have been impossible for any artist. After five sittings, she again destroyed her work, and was discouraged. She decided, one sleepless night, that in the morning she would tell the baroness that the work was beyond her, and must be relinquished. On the way to the rue Fortuny, there came to her, suddenly, like an inspiration—why not make the picture a faithful transcript of exactly what she saw? Why hold to a preconceived idea, founded on insufficient and superficial observation? Not a conventional, but a perfectly natural, portrait was desired of her; she not only was at liberty, she was expected, to be perfectly sincere, and it would be no matter if people who did not know the baroness as she

did were to regard the picture as feeble and sentimental. Gladly, she seated herself once more at her work; liberty and light had come to her; and, with wonderful rapidity, she painted a radiant, victorious, yet gentle and loveable face, in its early prime of beauty, a face that encouraged caressing hands, and kisses, and confidential confessions.

The baroness questioned Elsa with affectionate interest as to the experiences of her brief life; about her school, her training, the books she had read, her impressions in respect to art, her friendships. She became quite fond of the Masmajours, mother and daughters, from Elsa's account of them, and was much amused with the comicality of Monsieur Masmajour, which Elsa, with girlish mischief, depicted to her.

"And have you never built any castles in the air, dear girl? Do you never make pictures for yourself about your future?" the baroness asked, in the course of conversation.

"I have not thought very much about the future," Elsa replied; "still every one has some dreams, of course."

"Dream aloud, Fräulein Elsa, will you not?"

"I do not think I know what I used to dream about; but since, through your kindness, I have had my picture in the Salon, what I wish is—to be a great and famous painter, and to have a charming studio, which I often imagine to myself. There I would paint really beautiful things, and in oils also, later; and there would be almost always dear people there, who would like to come to sit with me."

"And so you would earn a great deal of money—"

"I don't think much about that," Elsa said; "you can earn what you need, of course, if you are a successful artist; but what I think of is fame, rather than money."

"Do you think fame makes one happy?"

"Oh, I think it would be so pleasant to have the *Vigie de la Presse* send a great roll of clippings every day, and in every one you were praised, from the beginning of the year to the end of it! And people

would consider it essential to culture, and a sign of thorough education, to know my name—"

"And then you would marry some stupid man and you would give up your name, and take his."

"Yes, that always vexes me," Elsa replied, eagerly. "That ought not to be so. It is humiliating. For my part, I intend to keep my own name always, even if I should be married."

The baroness smiled. "Perhaps your husband would take your name, if it had become famous. But how remarkable that a girl should be so ambitious! Fame! Do you know, dear child, what the chief advantage of fame is? It is that all the idiots now alive, or yet to be born, will have the opportunity to express their opinions in respect to you."

"And not the clever people also, Frau Baroness?"

"Perhaps you are not aware of the disproportion in numbers between these two classes! No, dear Fräulein, this dream of yours does not please me. Reputation attracts the crowd; you become a centre; you live in the midst of a throng; and I should be very sorry to have this to happen to you. For all contact with people causes pain in the end."

"All?" asked Elsa, incredulous; and she added softly, with a restrained tenderness, and yet a hidden reproach, in her voice: "I hope your contact with me, gracious lady, will never occasion you pain."

"And, on my part, I hope that you will never regret having come into my neighbourhood," the baroness said, with unusual earnestness.

She remained for a few minutes lost in thought, and then she went on: "It is a mistake of yours, to long for fame. You have no idea of a woman's rôle, and especially of her rights. To strive for fame, Fräulein Elsa, is to wish to please the indifferent. This is not the right thing. The indifferent must be made to try to please us. We do not strive for a crown, we bestow one. In the tournament of life, we are not the contestants in the lists, but the judges under the velvet baldacchino. Men must strive to their utmost that we may praise them; our smiles are their highest

reward. When you are older, you will become aware of the gift which nature has bestowed on us. We incite men to exert themselves and to show the best that is in them. The worst, also, at times, I must confess. But that rests with us, for the most part. If we did not forever spur them on, men would be idle, they would become foul, odious beasts, they would do nothing but eat, and smoke, and slaughter each other. We are the original cause of all profitable industry and all progress. And to fulfil the intentions of nature in respect to us, we have nothing to do, we have only to be. A true woman, especially a beautiful one—like yourself, dear child—derogates much, when she takes any trouble about fame."

Elsa listened, amazed, yet pleased. The views of the baroness were not unattractive, but she noticed a little inconsistency.

"But to make men better," she said, "you must come in contact with them—"

"Not with *them*; only with one. The others are to admire from a distance."

Elsa coloured, she scarcely knew why.

Another time the baroness asked where Elsa would like to live.

"As a child," the girl said, "I used to long for Germany. My grandmother used to relate fairy-stories to me, and also I had books of German fairy-tales which were my delight; and I imagined the country was full of elves and fairies and enchanted princes, so that I wished I were there. Some of my little school-mates, too, often used to go there to visit their relatives. That also seemed very attractive, and I wished I could visit aunts. I had none in Paris, so I thought they must be in Germany. Later, as I grew older, I smiled at my childish ideas. I ceased to think that fairies were running about the streets in all the German cities, and I liked Paris better and better, and I thought that I could never live anywhere else."

"And now?"

"Now—I don't know. I am perfectly willing to stay here, but it often seems to me that it makes very

little difference where you live, if you only have friends around you."

After nine sittings the picture was finished; Elsa declared, however, that there was still much to be done, and she came five more days. She would not lose one day of the fourteen which the baroness had allowed her. But at last this little love-stratagem came to an end; Elsa signed the aquarelle, and, with a sad heart, announced that the work was really done.

Then the baroness gazed long and thoughtfully at it, and declared that the artist had flattered her.

"Oh, no!" Elsa cried, "I tell you truly you are far more beautiful than this; I only tried to show how good and dear you are, Frau Baroness!"

The baroness kissed her, and then drew from the blotter on her desk a folded paper which lay in readiness there, and pressed it into Elsa's hand. "Tomorrow I am going to my place in Brittany, and I shall be away three or four months," she said; "so we will have this settled now; the charming talks that I have had with you, I could never pay you for."

Elsa did not look at the paper, but she understood that it was payment, in some form, for her work. She was so surprised and grieved that her heart seemed to stand still for a minute. The tears came into her eyes, and she could scarcely speak. "Oh, gracious lady!" she said, in a broken voice. "I did not expect this. It was such a pleasure for me to do it. I thought I should be permitted to give it to you, —and now —"

"But, dear girl," the baroness said, "every work is worth its recompense, and you must accustom yourself to accept your earnings. I should think you could take them from my hand more willingly perhaps than from any other."

Elsa brushed the tears away and looked up, sad and reproachful. "We were so glad at home that you would allow me to paint your picture. You had done so much for grandmamma, and for me, and for Madame Masmajour, and you are going to try to do

such a favour for Marie, too,—why do you deny us the privilege of showing just a very little of our gratitude?" And, shyly, she laid the cheque down upon the blotter.

"What a child!" the baroness said, then kissed her good-bye, upon the white brow.

On the following day a little package came to the Koppels, which bore the stamp of one of the great jewellers of the rue de la Paix. Inside was the visiting card of the baroness, with these words written: "To Fräulein Elsa Koppel, in remembrance of happy hours," and in a velvet case lay a gold bracelet, with a row of alternate rubies and diamonds. Although no one in the family was a connoisseur in precious stones, they all perceived at once that it was an extremely valuable gift. They could not endure the idea of inquiring its price at the jeweller's, but it was evidently an affair of thousands of francs. Elsa was humiliated that, after all, the baroness should have paid for the picture; but she soon forgot her vexation, for the bracelet was magnificent, her grandmother exclaimed with delight: "Now everybody can see that you are a little princess!" and her parents said that the baroness, like the *grande dame* that she was, had appropriately made return for the artistic gift with this valuable ornament.

And it gave Elsa almost more pleasure than did the bracelet when, at noon, the blonde Marie, with glowing cheeks and radiant eyes came flying up to say that her Jean had received a note from the head-cashier directing him to come to the French-Oriental bank at two o'clock. Frau Käthe would have been delighted to congratulate her at once, but she was anxious lest there might be some possibility of disappointment yet, and regarded it as a duty to warn the rejoicing girl against being too sure. But Marie was sure, notwithstanding, and stayed away from her work in the afternoon to accompany Jean on his momentous errand. In Koppel's apartment there was nearly as much excitement as in the rooms of the concierge. A little after three the whole party came

up-stairs: the wife of the concierge, the blonde Marie, Jean, who now appeared to the Koppels for the first time, Knecht himself, and the daughter next younger than Marie. Jean was not an ill-looking young fellow, sturdy, and in his Sunday clothes, as on the memorable day when he carried back the silver to its owner. They all cried out at once: "He has got his place! he has got his place! how grateful we are to you!"

Frau Käthe gently checked the exuberance of their gratitude, and in her practical, sensible way, inquired what the facts in the case were. She learned with satisfaction that Jean had been taken as bank-messenger, at first on trial, but, after six months, if he gave satisfaction, to receive the appointment as a permanency. The pay, at first, would be 2,000 francs, and the head of the department had said to him that, by diligence and good conduct, he could increase this considerably, perhaps, even, double it. Besides this, there were New Year's gifts, a fund for the sick, a pension—in short Jean need envy no king.

After a suitable time, the others withdrew, but the blonde Marie remained to pour out her full and happy heart. Now, everything was settled. The wedding would be in October. Until then, they had to look for rooms, as near as possible to the bank, to get together a little furniture, to prepare her things,—this was very difficult and expensive, and indeed almost impossible, especially because there was the security for Jean to be furnished; but it was so entertaining to get ready for housekeeping! Life looked so bright before her! And only think, counting in her earnings, the two would have as much as eight francs a day to begin life! Was not that fine? And all this good fortune just as they had been so discouraged! For now she could tell—Jean had used up all his savings; he had been obliged to have assistance from her father; if the effort about the bank failed, he had already decided that he would leave Paris and go elsewhere, perhaps to Algiers, in search of employment; and if he had been obliged to go so far away, who could tell what would become of him—and it would

have broken her heart! And here, the girl's talk came to an end, she kissed Frau Käthe's hand, grasped Elsa's two hands with hers, and exclaimed: "This will bring good luck to you, I am sure, mademoiselle! You will see. And if you please, you will not be ashamed to dance at my wedding, will you? My *patron* will be there, and papa's colonel and his old comrades and gentlemen of the Elsasser-Verein, all such fine people! We almost grew up together, you and I, did we not?" Frau Käthe and Elsa promised to attend the wedding; and the girl departed, absolutely beaming with joy.

The whole house soon heard the good news. The blonde Marie communicated it in person to the Masmajours, and made it extremely plain that the interposition of the Koppels had determined Jean's future. While Madame Masmajour and the girls—above whose dainty figures the tall daughter of the concierge towered, like a gothic steeple above the houses of a town—heartily congratulated Marie, Masmajour himself, who was present, wore a cloudy brow.

"Yes," he grumbled, as soon as they were alone, "to get any advantages here you have to be a foreigner."

"But, papa," Blanche rejoined, "Marie's fiancé is not a foreigner."

Masmajour's only answer was an inarticulate growl; then he went on to say, bringing out bitterly his real thought in the case; "This Jean had not much pride to beg Monsieur Koppel to assist him in finding employment. I know people who would be ashamed to obtain, by such means, the position which is their due."

CHAPTER XI.

THE KOPPELS GO TO THE SEASHORE.

A FEW days before the middle of July, Pfister came again to see Koppel, and said to him good-naturedly: "Well, Herr Doctor, have you made your plans for the summer?"

"What do you mean?" Koppel asked, surprised at his confidential manner.

"There is nothing going on at the Bourse, these days. After the next settling-day I propose to have a few weeks out of town. You ought to do the same, Herr Doctor."

"Perhaps I may."

"Would you not like to wind up your affairs before you go away?"

"Why should I?" asked Koppel in amazement.

"Oh, I only meant that it is usually done. You have worked splendidly. When a man has won a good deal, it is perhaps wise to call in his money. Then he can enjoy the seashore peacefully. I suppose you would go to the sea? Then, in the autumn, we take up business again."

"No, no," Koppel said, "if I were to sell my Almaden now, and buy it back again in the autumn, I think my summer journey would cost me too dear."

"But it is worth while to make a little sacrifice for the sake of tranquillity."

"My position does not cause me any anxiety."

"You are a hero, Herr Doctor; I respect you! Do as you please. But I felt that I ought to offer you this piece of advice. The London Exchange has this saying: 'Sell and be sorry for it.'"

"But you shall not have taken the trouble entirely for naught. I will unload a little. Finish up with my two hundred Sicilians, please."

"Very good, Herr Doctor. At what price shall I buy them in?"

"Well, it is no great matter. I will not drag on with those tiresome Sicilians any longer; there will never be any profit there. Try to get them as cheap as you can, and I will take up a hundred Almaden at the settling.

Pfiester wrote the orders in his book and went away. The next day Koppel was eager, though not specially anxious, to see the Bourse lists. He was therefore unpleasantly surprised to see that the Sicilians, which had been motionless for weeks, had suddenly risen ten francs. The last quotation of the day was, however, 7 fr. 50 lower than the opening one. The broker's letter brought him the information that his two hundred shares had been bought in at the highest quotation. Pfiester found it worth while to come and explain to him that the market at present was very narrow, and the slightest demand was enough to send prices up. That he himself had sold the two hundred Sicilians to Koppel, and had been able soon after to cover at the lower price, he naturally did not tell him. Pfiester regarded this transaction as fully justifiable. Koppel was making a fortune in Almaden. Why should he not spare from his gains at least the cost of the holiday journey?

With the Sicilians, Koppel lost all that he had gained in his Calabrians, and six hundred francs besides. He did not mind this very much, for Almaden, meantime, had risen to 615 fr.; he had gained 76,000 francs, and compared with this, 600 francs was insignificant. But his experience in this affair confirmed him in the resolution never again to give an order without a limit of price. Upon the whole, he was glad to be rid of the Sicilians. Now he had left only his Almadens, which were a joy to him. When, after the settling day of the middle of July, he received the hundred shares of Almaden which he had taken up and had paid for out of his winnings, and carried them to the Crédit Lyonnais, it seemed to him that he was no longer speculating, but simply

increasing his capital. These certificates of stock which he fingered, which rustled as he turned them over, were no longer a stake which the croupier's rake now cast towards him, now drew away from him; or a witch's treasure which now increased, now diminished, and constantly fooled the hand stretched out to grasp it; this was a permanent gain which he could lay away safely with his other possessions, where, behind the steel door of his box in the safety-vault it would no longer be an object of dispute.

He, therefore, allowed himself to consider Pfister's suggestion of a pleasure-trip. Pleasure-trips had not been known in the Koppel family, heretofore. They were too expensive. Moreover, some of the pupils at the school were accustomed to remain during the summer months, and to pay extra for oversight and instruction at that time, so that Koppel's summer vacation brought in quite a respectable addition to his income. Nor was the journey needful, since, happily, all the family were in excellent health. But now there suddenly seized upon Koppel a hitherto unknown desire for a change. He felt like a prisoner. He could not breathe as he ought, in city air. He must get away, out of town, into a different atmosphere, among new faces. He had now been ten years in Paris, and during this interminable time he had not gone outside the walls more than a dozen times, and then only for a few hours, never to stay overnight, nor to any greater distance than Saint-Germain or Montmorency. He had really sinned against his own family, especially the children, and it was high time to make amends. He at once made known to Wolzen that he was not to be counted upon for this year for vacation duty. Wolzen, who never denied himself the summer journey, and was accustomed to leave the school entirely in charge of his conscientious assistant, received this communication as an extremely disagreeable surprise, which disturbed him in his plans; but he had to make the best of it. Koppel, for several days, was deep in guide-books and railway circulars; he sought information from his colleagues in the school,

and from parents of pupils ; and finally, one evening he announced to his family that, at the beginning of August, they were to go to the sea-shore for some eight weeks.

Elsa gave a cry of delight, and clapped her hands. Oscar seemed to be extremely shocked. He changed colour noticeably, and while the others were expressing their opinions he remained perfectly silent. The old lady only inquired if they were to take Martha, the maid, away with them, and, if they did take her, who would look after the apartment while they were away. Frau Käthe was extremely surprised ; she was also somewhat displeased that so important a decision should be named to her for the first time as a settled thing, and inquired in an unmistakably offended tone whether she was at liberty to express an opinion on the subject, or was expected merely to obey.

" I think obedience will not be very hard, since I am not requiring a painful sacrifice of you."

" Certainly not," replied Frau Käthe, at once speaking seriously. " I am very grateful for your kind intention ; but there are many agreeable things one must deny oneself when one has to count the cost."

" You are eternally counting the cost," Koppel said, jokingly, " your arithmetic always spoils for you the pleasure of the hour. Life is not all figures."

" Life is not, but my account-book is," rejoined Frau Käthe dryly.

" True, but the figures of your account-book are not alarming. We can allow ourselves an innocent recreation for once."

" Yes, if you have some secret treasure, that I don't know anything about."

An almost imperceptible smile came to Koppel's lips, and he said : " Do not give yourself unnecessary anxiety. What I propose to you we can well afford. We have worked diligently all the year, we deserve a little rest and pleasure. Elsa has had a grand success ; Oscar has studied hard ; it will be good for you, too, to get away from the treadmill for a few weeks ; and mother will gain in the sea-air."

"I think, Hugo," Frau Koppel said, who, at mention of cost, had become thoughtful, "I think I would rather stay here. You all go, and enjoy yourselves, and I will take care of the house."

"I will stay with you, then, grandmother," Oscar said, in a low voice.

Koppel regarded him with amazement. "What, my boy," he said, "you don't care about going to the sea-shore?"

"Paris is beautiful in the summer," Oscar replied, without meeting his father's eyes, "and during school-time, one never gets a chance to see it."

A feeling of deep and painful sympathy came over Koppel. How narrow, how darkened, were the souls of these poor women, of this poor boy! How anxiously they crept along the ground! Even in their thoughts and dreams their wings were shrivelled by the compression of their narrow circumstances. Even to the mere wish for a freer, nobler existence they must be slowly and carefully trained. Only Elsa had buoyancy. Only she appreciated the charm of the wide outlook which her father opened before them all; her mother's opposition made her very sad, and she defended her hope for the pleasure-trip with an eagerness which finally got the better of the prudent housewife's objections. And, later, Elsa had to argue strenuously to persuade Frau Käthe to do herself the violence of making use of the credit which Koppel had opened for her, for the purchase of bathing-suits and clothes appropriate for the sea-shore. On the following Sunday Koppel, with a return ticket, went to investigate Berck-sur-Mer, which had been recommended to him. As Frau Käthe would not hear of staying at a hotel, he was to look for a house, but he preferred to go alone on this errand. His family should find all arrangements made for them in advance. He succeeded very well about the house, as he made no scruple as to price, and came home with such a glowing picture of the delightful things awaiting them that at least Elsa was very impatient to be off.

Koppel waited till the settlement at the end of the

month which gave him a further profit of about 20,000 francs, so that he could take up twenty-five shares more of Almaden, and lay them aside, also, before he left Paris.

The parting from the Masmajours was very hard for Elsa. She felt for the first time how dear the mother and daughters had become to her. She kissed her friends and made them promise they would write often. She asked if they could not possibly come to visit her in Berck. Her father said there would be room for guests, with a little crowding, and the excursion tickets from Saturday to Monday were so cheap. "Oh, that would be splendid!" Blanche cried, and looked at her mother inquiringly, but Madame Masmajour replied that she could not promise now, but later she would see. Oscar was evidently more regretful at the parting than Elsa, but he concealed his feelings as much as possible so that they attracted no attention from his family. Knecht forgot his usual dignity so far as to help in bringing down the luggage. He extended his hand to Koppel, who gave his own cordially, and received the assurance that the concierge would watch over the apartment carefully during the family's absence. And at the last moment Knecht gave the old lady advice, in German, to be very careful not to take cold at the seashore.

The house which Koppel had hired in Berck stood alone among the dunes, about fifty paces distant from the next villa, and at the end of the row of houses which stood along the shore. From the wooden balcony in front there was a broad view over the sea, which produced effect only through the beauty of its ever changing light and motion, and otherwise was a great primitive solitude, since large vessels, on account of the shallowness of the water, did not come within the range of vision, and only small fishing-boats at certain hours of the day enlivened the intense solitude of the watery mirror. The sand-hill on which the house was built fell steeply away, so that one slid rather than walked down, although the path was cut out diagonally on the slope. At its base extended the perfectly level

shore of the finest sand, which the tides, twice a day, alternately overflowed and left dry almost as far out as the eye could see. The beach which the retreating tide at last revealed was of a deep golden brown; this colour became lighter in regular gradation, until finally, where the sand had the longest time to dry, it was dazzlingly white. On the darker portion it was very pleasant to walk, as on a firm but elastic asphalt pavement. Nearer in, the walking was more and more tiresome, until, finally, where the sand was white, one had to wade step by step, and with each step sink to the ankles.

Behind the house, on the land side, lay the street, beginning at a café at the extreme edge of the colony, and leading past all the villas to the centre of the place where, around the station-house of the branch railway, were grouped the post-office, the inevitable casino, the hotels, and the shops. Koppel's villa had no opposite neighbour. Across the street the wild dune stretched inward, luxuriantly overgrown with very tall sea-grass, furze, and heath,—which were absolutely impenetrable, unless one were willing to tear and stamp out a path through the stiff, tangled growth—and undermined by countless rabbit-burrows, whose inhabitants were betrayed by their foot-tracks in the sand.

In the distance was visible behind a screen of trees the church-tower of the actual village, which was quite beyond the region of the dunes. There lived the regular population of peasants and fisherman. The houses on the shore were exclusively for the summer guests, and outside the bathing season they stood empty for the most part.

The bath was taken directly in front of the villa, and, if the tide at all permitted, in the forenoon. Bathing-houses there were none, nor were they needed. Each put on his bathing-suit in his own room, and went across a few steps into the water, where the mother and daughter remained near the edge, and the father and son, both experienced swimmers, struck out into the sea, while Frau Koppel sat with her knit-

ting-work on the balcony, and contentedly watched the splashing of the former and the glidings of the latter. In the beginning it shocked the old lady that the two sexes should bathe thus promiscuously, and walk about when they came out of the water in their dripping and clinging garments, and she was still more displeased when, later, she walked down the beach, where the bathers were in a crowd. Here, however, there were no spectators to embarrass one. The precious solitude was but rarely disturbed by the coast-guard who made his round usually mornings and evenings; or by a shrimp-catcher, who with a drag-net on his shoulder, his trousers pushed up to the knee, wandered along the beach on his homeward way or else towards the villa-street; or, more rarely, by a group of summer visitors on foot, on donkey-back, or on bicycles, making their way along the beach to the café. The appearance of this very noisy troop, in glaring white or screaming striped garments, which were fashioned with artistic negligence, was such an exception that the old lady took it amiss. It appeared to her that the sands before the house, and the sea beyond, as far as the eye could reach, belonged to them, and should be protected from the occasional intrusion of vulgar people.

One sight which she had twice a day, near high tide, delighted her beyond the power of words to express. Many hundred gulls assembled, in a single, perfectly straight line along the edge of the incoming tide, their heads towards the sea, with incessant merry screaming and cackling, and fell back, in unbroken, undisturbed rank, slowly, before the advancing waves, for the most part waddling or hopping, but sometimes with a momentary flutter of wings when the thin sheet of water gliding in struck somewhat forcibly against their legs. It was as if these attractive birds were performing in common a regular act of worship, or were taking a prescribed ceremonial foot-bath. This always lasted about a half an hour, and it was only when the gulls, thus retreating before the advancing tide, had nearly reached the dune, that they suddenly, all at once, rose

into the air, and giving one last scream of joy, with wide-spread wings flew far away. Frau Koppel, who was really fond of children, came very near, one day, throwing a stopper that she happened to have in her hand at a small boy who mischievously ran in among the flock of gulls and scared them off. It was so beautiful to see the handsome birds rimming the edge of the sea, like another silvery wave-fringe!

There was a certain annoyance to which the old lady could not become reconciled. This was the palpable sand-drift, which came in through the smallest cracks and crevices and against which it was, unfortunately, impossible to protect oneself. Vainly you used a dust-cloth: scarcely was table or cupboard brushed off when a new layer of dust was deposited, and, in the morning, when you were dressing, as you took up each article of clothing an actual rain of sand fell out of it. This incessant war upon the sand-dust made it quite distressing to her to stay in-doors, and she remained in the open air as much as possible.

In Berck there were several institutions for sea-air cure of delicate children. These had been in part founded, and were maintained, by private charity; in part, they belonged to the City of Paris and to some of the inland departments. From these asylums there came out, after the mid-day meal, long processions of little invalids, who went down to the beach and remained there the whole afternoon, returning in time for supper. The pathetic train was a collection of all the pains and hurts from which humanity suffers. Led and accompanied, the girls by sisters of charity and secular attendants, the boys by male nurses, these children limped and crawled up the dunes and over the sands: some hunchbacked, others on crutches, and others lying stretched out in little carriages pushed by an attendant, the most favoured among them having no visible deformity, but small-limbed, narrow-chested, with sickly, unnaturally wizened faces, whose unhealthy pallor showed through the sun-burn. And when their poor little bodies were divested of clothes by an attendant, and they were put into the

warm, shallow water to bathe and play, how pathetic their appearance! Here and there, a beautiful blonde cherub's head upon shapeless, distorted shoulders, frightful humps on back and breast, spindling arms, knees shockingly swollen, lamentably crooked legs and twisted feet, grim caricatures, as if devised by an evil intelligence who sought to turn to some malicious jest the noble beauty of the race, revolting blunders of Nature, or her cruel visiting of the sins of our generation upon the innocent offspring of criminal, or perhaps only unfortunate, parents, degenerating in the misery of city life.

When Frau Koppel first beheld this troop of little invalids, she was horror-struck; she turned, and fled back to the villa, declaring that she would never again go to that part of the beach where the children, in sun and sea-air, sand and salt-water, were trying to bathe themselves well. But her sympathy got the better of her. In her old heart the half-torpid impulse of motherhood awakened again, and drove her irresistibly to the little sufferers, to do some kind thing for them if she could. She sat down beside them in the sand, she sought to be helpful to the sisters, as they, like the Good Shepherd of the Bible, carried the lame and feeble in their arms, and, modest in their nun's dress, would go into the water till their clothes were wet to the knees that they might give the little creatures a dip. Although she could not exchange a word with either children or nurses, they understood each other very soon, and the little ones, after a few days, greeted her with screams of delight when they saw her approaching.

More touching, however, than the flock of sick children who were daily taken to the beach and back again, was something by itself which the Koppels saw, the first time they took a long walk on the sands. Near the general bathing-place, however, a little removed from the noisy groups of children who were building fortifications and chasing each other up and down, and also somewhat remote from the gossiping older people with their croquet-playing, sat, just at the water's



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edge, almost splashed by the waves, a poorly-dressed woman on a camp-stool, in the shadow of a great cotton umbrella that she had set up in the sand. Across her lap, in a kind of framework, wrapped like a mummy, lay a sick boy, five or six years old, with a pallid little face, and big quiet eyes that were scarcely ever turned away from the woman's anxious countenance. Whenever the Koppels went along the beach, at every hour of the day and in every kind of weather, there the woman sat, her child upon her lap, following the water's edge, in towards the dunes, or far away out towards the sea,—untiring, although her position was so uncomfortable, busy with some kind of handiwork, alone, silent, patient, her eyes ever seeking the eyes of the boy, a never-to-be-forgotten picture of a *mater dolorosa*.

The tears came into Frau Käthe's eyes when she saw this woman, and Elsa could not resist the desire to befriend her. After they had passed her several times, going and returning, they both sat down near her, at which she looked up surprised and suspicious, and then bent her eyes upon her boy as before. They succeeded, however, in making conversation with her, and she could not resist their friendly manner. They learned that she was a widow, and that the boy was her only child, and that he suffered from a disease of the bones, a distortion of the spine, so that he was obliged to lie motionless. They also learned, in subsequent conversation, that she was extremely poor, that she could not, however, persuade herself to entrust her child to the hospital when the doctor had told her that the sea-air would be useful to him. She had sold or pawned enough to provide herself with a little money; she had come to Berck in the middle of July, and was living with incredible frugality. She herself ate almost nothing but bread and cheese; but the boy had not lacked for suitable food. But she was now greatly distressed at the thought that she could not remain much longer, since her little stock of money was nearly exhausted.

After talking the matter over with her parents, Elsa

made known to the poor woman that she was an artist, that she would like to work on the seashore, and that she had in mind a picture for which the afflicted mother would be an admirable model. After this, Elsa went out every day, accompanied by her father and mother, sat down near the poor woman, petted the boy, and sketched or painted for an hour, first the woman with her crochet-work, with the pale child upon her lap, and the sad eyes; and after that the figures of well and happy passers-by, who stopped to sympathize and thrust a five-franc piece into the busy, tireless hand. Her father had given her a hundred francs to expend in this work of love. According to his calculation, this would give the poor mother six weeks longer in Berck. To him it was no sacrifice. And he experienced the strongest satisfaction he had yet known in this change in his circumstances, which enabled him to bring a little hope and comfort to a sorely afflicted mother's heart.

Oscar was almost always with his sister, whether on the sands or in the village; but twice a day he vanished, first, excusing himself, but later, without saying anything. He was seen to walk rapidly away in the direction of the villas, returning half an hour later, sad, thoughtful and silent. Elsa thought it so odd that once she asked him, jokingly, if he went to play at the Casino and had lost. But he only replied that she ought not to talk foolishly.

About ten days after their arrival in Berck, Elsa chanced one evening, at the dining-room window which opened upon the street, to overhear Oscar asking the postman whether *poste-restante* letters also passed through his hands.

"That depends," the postman said; "those for the village I stamp, but those for the seashore come directly here and I have nothing to do with them."

"How is that?" Oscar said, "letters have to be addressed specially to come to this post-office."

"Certainly."

"And if only addressed Berck-sur-mer?"

"Then they remain at the village."

"Oh, is that so?" Oscar said. "How late is the post-office open?"

"Till seven o'clock, but it is now closed," the post-man answered. He saluted and went on.

Elsa had gone to the door, meantime, and she asked Oscar if he expected a letter "to be kept till called for."

The boy turned very red, and said: "That does not concern you."

"You fraud! Do you have secrets from me? That's not very brotherly of you;" and quite vexed, she was about to leave him.

But Oscar, much disturbed, held her fast and stammered:

"Don't please! I only have—I only wanted—well, if you are anxious to know, I will tell you." While talking, some idea had evidently occurred to his versatile brain and he said, without further hesitation: "I have sent a poem to a newspaper and begged to have an answer addressed *poste-restante*. Now you have the secret. Are you satisfied?"

"Not altogether. You ought to have told me, instead of stealing off to the post-office twice a day. But what paper is it? And have you a copy of your poem here?"

Oscar was very much pleased that she followed this lead (which was a false one), and he narrated to her, about his poetical efforts, all that she was willing to listen to. The confession was very unexpected, for she had not the slightest idea that ambition of this kind had taken possession of his soul. He promised to read to her what he had with him, but another time, for, this evening, he was tired.

In the morning, before the bathing hour, he went off, and hastened to the village post-office. It was nearly twice as far as to the shore post-office; he remained longer away than usual, and there was a general inquiry after him, as the others would not go into the water until he was with them. When he at last appeared, heated, his usually pale cheeks crimsoned, and his eyes very bright, his mother called him to ac-

count. "Where have you been, boy?" she said. "What have you been about, so early in the morning, all by yourself?"

"Oh, mother, it is so nice to run through the broom," he said coaxingly, "and I have to have some exercise. All day long there is nothing to do here!"

Frau Käthe accepted the explanation, but Elsa smiled secretly, for she knew more about it. When they were ready to go into the water, as they went across the beach, she stepped alongside of her brother, and said, in a low voice: "Well, was your poem accepted?"

He looked at her in surprise, but, instantly recovering himself, replied: "I have no news from it yet."

"That can't be true. I see plainly enough that you are very happy."

"Do you see plainly that I am very happy? Well, I am; but it is for another reason. On the way I made a poem. I think it is a good one. And so, of course, I'm happy."

That afternoon, as Elsa sat on the beach near her poor woman and washed in her aquarelle, Oscar read aloud to her a number of his poems and prose pieces. It was not easy to decide which of them was the poetry and which, the prose. For the poems were written in "free" lines, that is to say, unequal in number of feet, and only approximately rhymed; and the prose had a certain rhythm, and an artistic, elevated diction. The substance was love's longing, alternated with a bitter contempt for the world, and proud forecasts of his own future greatness as a poet, and ecstatic imagery of presentiments and dreams; the form, now, extremely affected, with allusions to the latest novelties in art and literature, with fine-spun, obscure mental impressions, and laboured adjectives, and now, intentionally primitive, childish and homely, almost babbling, with uncouth intention all the time of being dark and deep; and with a multitude of new words, of which only part were comprehensible.

Elsa listened with growing surprise. After Oscar had read a few pieces she said: "I do not know

whether it pleases me. One must become accustomed to it, perhaps."

"It is modern," Oscar remarked, self-satisfied, but also sensitive.

"But it is really quite different from everything I am familiar with. I don't very well understand the measure. Victor Hugo, Sully Prudhomme, Leconte de l'Isle, and, I suppose, Théophile Gautier, are all modern?"

"What a Philistine you are, with your old periwigs! You are not in the movement. I shall have to teach you. You must read the *Idéal*, the monthly, to which I intend to be a regular contributor."

To this Elsa agreed; Oscar had in his box some of the plum-coloured numbers, and he introduced his sister to many solemn and impassioned disputations on the future of Poetry, on "free" Versification, on the Beauty of Anarchy, on the Royalty of the Artist, which were the staple of their contents. It was a new and somewhat strange world of thought, and not particularly attractive to Elsa: she, however, gave so much attention to it that she spoke of it at table. Thus the parents learned of Oscar's thoughts, and, though he made very strong objection, he was obliged to show them some of his productions. He chose, without consulting his sister, exactly those pieces which were most inoffensive and most comprehensible. His father only shook his head over them, and laughed in a friendly way. "You are coming into the lyric period, my boy. We all of us go through it. Later, one gets past it! But there's nothing to be ashamed of in these youthful amusements." Frau Käthe, however, was very sad: "I cannot follow you," she said. "Why do you not write your poetry in German?"

Oscar appeared to be surprised. Evidently, the idea had never occurred to him. "I don't know," he replied; "this seemed more natural. I always think in French. And I scarcely read anything but French."

"Then you would like to be a French poet?"

"Why not?"

"That is all right, and I have no objection, if you will be faithful with your studies, all the same," Koppel said finally ; and the subject was dropped.

Elsa felt it her duty, later, to console Oscar over the questionable success of his reading. She found however, that his parents' indifference had produced no effect upon him whatever. "Papa and mamma are foreigners," he said, in a tone of superiority, "they don't feel it, but they are. And besides, we do not write for our predecessors, but for those who are to follow us."

Frau Käthe spoke with her husband somewhat anxiously about Oscar's French authorship ; Koppel consoled her, however, with the assurance that he would see to it that Oscar remained a good German.

From that time on, the boy was regarded somewhat differently in his own family ; it was as if he had laid aside the boy's toga, and had entered upon the age of responsibility. Elsa, who, in the last few months, had become in a certain degree estranged from him, and had accustomed herself to regard him as a child, began to take him seriously again. Through her art-work, her success at the Salon, and her new social relations, she had far outstripped him ; now, through his unsuspected intellectual interests, he had come up with her, as by one long stride, and he was very near having the ascendancy over her, although she was much more mature in character than he. There came a suspicion to the parents that a new world lay before them, with laws and exigencies of its own, and many unknown, and therefore disquieting things, an independent personality, which, by degrees and unnoticed, had drawn away from them, which they must now learn how to grasp and care for again.

Elsa kept up a diligent correspondence with Adèle, who related to her all the family and house news, while Elsa described to her Berck, its scenery and people, and added to her letter clever sketches, often in colour, which, according to Adèle's faithful and credible assertion, were a delight to the Masmajour

family, and, on the one hand, inspired them with the greatest desire to splash in that wide, rippling water and lie on the white sand at the foot of the dunes, while, on the other hand, they so faithfully represented Berck, its beauty and delightfulness, that they were almost equal to the reality. Adele wrote well and sincerely. In all her words appeared the warm affection she felt for her friend. "It is singular," she wrote once, "how empty great Paris with its millions of people can seem, when from these millions one single person is missing." The sentence pleased Oscar so much that he wove it artistically into a sonnet, which Elsa declared to be the best thing he had yet written. She desired a copy to send to Paris, but Oscar said, with a somewhat conscious smile, that that was unnecessary.

Though repeatedly invited, the Masmajours had not been able to decide on coming to Berck for a few days, but an unexpected visitor, in the second half of August, took the Koppels by surprise. One afternoon, Herr Brünne-Tillig, unannounced, appeared at the villa, where he found Koppel alone, who, with much pleasure, took him at once in search of the others on the beach. He explained that before the autumn manœuvres of the French army, which he was to attend, he had a short leave of absence, and was devoting it to an excursion along the coast; and, learning in the rue Saint-André-des-Arts, that the Koppels were in Berck, he had directed his steps thither on first leaving Paris.

On his arrival, Brünne-Tillig spoke of making a very short stay; he remained, however, a whole week. He was with the Koppels almost the whole day, only that he came somewhat late mornings, having noticed that Elsa would not take her bath when he was there. He was very active and stirring, and always had something to propose: excursions on foot and in a carriage, on donkeys and in a sail-boat, now to the village, now to neighbouring beaches, from Saint-Gabriel and Saint-Cécile on the north, to Crotoy and the mouth of the Somme on the south; to attend hops and balls at the

Casino, concerts, pigeon-shooting; and at the theatre, the latest Parisian operettas and farces. Also, he persuaded them to rabbit-hunting and shrimp-catching, so that while he was there they could scarcely find time to breathe. Now, for the first time they began really to know the place and the neighbourhood, and gained an idea of the life usually led at seashore resorts. Frau Käthe found all this amusement rather fatiguing. She sacrificed herself, however, in silence, for she saw that the others enjoyed themselves heartily with the lively, restless young man. It was noticeable that he was always, as if accidentally, at Elsa's side, but this occurred without obtrusiveness on his part; with well-bred, respectful reserve, so that the girl had no cause to draw back, and could accustom herself to walk and talk with him innocently, as if with a friend.

In this animated week, there happened to be a full moon, and in the perfectly fair, calm summer weather, the evenings on the beach were of fabulous beauty. With the exception of the old lady, who still kept to her usual early hours, the whole family remained together till nearly midnight, almost every evening, by turns loitering over the moist sand which creaked under the step, or lying down where the sand was dry and warm. The moon stood almost as bright as day above the faintly murmuring, shining sea, and to right and left glittered in the distance the white and coloured lights of festive illuminations. They talked about everything, and Elsa was more animated and mischievous than her parents had ever seen her before. And also in Elsa, to her mother's astonishment, appeared much that was unsuspected, making her feel a stranger and almost timid, in the presence of the girl.

Frau Käthe complained, among other things, of the innumerable feminine bicyclists, who tore past along the street to the café; the sight of these kicking women, at all hours of the day, rushing by her windows, was so unendurable to her that she kept out of the rooms on the street side of the house. Elsa defended the lovers of the wheel.

"Nothing could be more unfeminine," Frau Käthe said.

"But why, mamma?" Elsa rejoined. "If the bicycle is a valuable invention, and its use is salutary and pleasant, I really do not see why we, alone, should be shut out from it. Every advantage, however innocent, we have been obliged to capture for ourselves, amid universal opposition. When unlucky near-sighted women for the first time ventured to aid their eyes with glasses, as men had been doing for thousands of years, there was an outcry: 'What! a woman with glasses, with a *pince-nez*, or worse still with a monocle! How disgusting! How unfeminine!' It used to be unfeminine that a lady should go into a restaurant alone; it was unfeminine that a lady should attempt to paint. Now what is it to be feminine, really?"

"It is feminine to be modest, and not seek to attract notice," Frau Käthe said with unusual emphasis. "These persons use a bicycle in order to be looked at. It is a saucy attempt to make themselves interesting."

"That may be so in many cases. The women who are the first to decide to break with custom and do a new thing, are not the reserved; and I am willing to admit that they must have a certain amount of audacity. Their underlying motive is not perhaps the most praiseworthy. It is possible they wish to attract attention. But they cannot do this very long; they are quickly imitated, soon everybody gets used to the new thing, and it passes unnoticed. Then all women, even the most quiet and proper, can follow the new custom, and no one turns his head to look at them. So things right themselves in the end. Those who break out the path excite resistance purposely, and find their recompense in being the object of remark. We say they are lacking in modesty, but in the end their audacity does us service. I believe that audacious women unconsciously have the vocation to gain new rights for the modest ones."

"Bravo!" cried Koppel, enchanted by the girl's adroit and well-stated argument, and Oscar listened with delight.

"Permit me also to applaud, gracious Fräulein!" said Brünne-Tillig, "and still I cannot imagine you a bicyclist. That hunched-up attitude! That dress! Brr!"

"Yes, I do not think it is beautiful, myself. There is something more to be discovered, something that will be pretty and graceful; we shall get it some day. There will be an improvement in the wheel, and the costume will be more pleasing. And then you will not object to our riding the bicycle, Herr Brünne-Tillig?"

"Certainly not, gracious Fräulein. I have not the slightest objection myself to the extension of women's rights. In heaven's name let women at every point be like men. I would only most respectfully propose that they try to resemble well-behaved men. It is a remarkable thing that emancipated ladies, when they act the man, always imitate the most ill-bred of our sex. The lady bicyclists come, dusty, into the Casino, they walk about with their hands in their pockets, they talk loud, they sit cross-legged in their chairs, they affect nonchalance in manners and dress. And it is just the same in regard to other points on which you have touched. Ladies using a lorgnon stare in people's faces in a way that would be followed at once by a challenge, were a man to allow himself to be guilty of such a rudeness. Ladies who smoke, do so on occasions and in places where a man accustomed to good society would never take the liberty. I grant the ladies every right, except the right to be ill-bred."

"That is because we are in time of war," Elsa replied, smiling; "the women are fighting for their rights, and they cannot help the noise and tumult that always accompanies fighting. When peace is concluded, then things will regulate themselves."

"What are the terms on which peace will be made! Will marriage be abolished?" Brünne-Tillig inquired, mischievously.

"Oh, no!" Elsa cried, with so much alacrity that everybody laughed. Whereat she blushed violently. "But in marriage, the woman will be with entire

freedom and with equal rights, a co-worker with the man."

"In my profession there would be difficulty about that. The wife as co-worker in the command of a regiment—" said Brünne-Tillig, seriously.

"I have no experience personally," Elsa rejoined, "but papa brings home the *Fliegender Blatter* sometimes, and if I may believe that, it appears that the Frau Colonel not infrequently has a voice in regimental affairs."

Again everybody laughed, and Brünne-Tillig was most amused of all; and he began narrating many anecdotes from his own experience in the service, for the purpose of maintaining the justice of this last remark.

Brünne-Tillig's amiability and interest extended even to Oscar, who, with a kind of unconscious jealousy, kept watch over his sister, and never left her for a moment when the young officer was near. The latter succeeded in inducing the half-aroused, early-matured youth—who was scarcely more than a boy in age—to talk with him freely. The foreign accent with which Oscar spoke German seemed to Brünne-Tillig very pretty; Oscar's French constructions made the older man smile; and every now and then Brünne-Tillig had to help the boy out with a word. At many things that Oscar said, however, the young officer was startled or joined issue with him at once. When Oscar spoke scornfully of the Migration of the Nations as an incursion of Barbarians, Brünne-Tillig asked: "Did you know that these Barbarians were our ancestors?" To Oscar, the Seventeenth Century was "the Great Century;" and on Brünne-Tillig's remark that this was the period of the Thirty Years' War, of desolation, and of debasement, Oscar rejoined: "But only in the German empire."

"You have become a thorough little Frenchman in your views. But it's no matter. Your year in the Guards will put you to rights."

"Indeed, it will not," Oscar replied petulantly.

"Do not be too sure of that, my young friend."

"Military slavery may perhaps subdue a feeble nature ; but a strong individuality can resist it," Oscar cried hotly.

Brünne-Tillig only smiled. "Is this what you have learned in the Paris schools?"

"I don't know whether we learn it in school or not ; but this I know, that many of us despise militarism because it debases the individual, making him but a machine of destruction."

"If young France thinks in that way so much the better for us, and so much the worse for France," said Brünne-Tillig, dryly. He began to find the youth too forward. Oscar, however, was now launched, and he went on : "My comrades are also opposed to war, that is to say, the intelligent ones. There are *Chaurvins* and *patriotards* among us, but those fellows are laughed at. They are grocers' sons. When our generation comes up, we shall have reason and justice in the world, not barbaric bloodshed, which proves nothing."

Brünne-Tillig only laughed indulgently, and Elsa, who felt how unsuitable this kind of talk was, addressed to an officer, hastened to take control of the conversation and give it a different direction.

As Brünne-Tillig's stay in Berck prolonged itself day after day, Frau Käthe one night abandoned her shy, instinctive reserve toward her husband, and said abruptly : "Tell me, Hugo, are you pleased that the young man is so taken up with us?"

"Why not?" Koppel said, surprised. "You don't like him, then?"

"Oh, yes ! But I am afraid Elsa likes him, also."

"You are afraid ? What would be the harm ?"

"What ! Do you think it is right to let things go on till the poor child gets an idea in her head which can never be realized?"

"I do not see that danger at all. If the two young people like each other, there is the usual *dénoûment* with which every well-constructed German drama concludes."

"Do you seriously think that Brünne-Tillig could marry our Elsa?"

"Certainly I do think it. Is she not good enough for him?"

"You mustn't ask her mother that. But in society a young girl is not valued according to her worth. Herr von Brünne-Tillig is a man of rank, and doubtless expects a great deal. He has a right to expect it. While we—"

"We, my good Käthe, are respectable people, I think, and it would be a disgrace to no man to be connected with us. Herr von Brünne-Tillig does not take us for money-bags. He is too clear-sighted and sharp-sighted for that. He has been at our house, and he has seen that we are modest, unassuming people. If he continues to visit us, and seeks our intimacy, it is because he likes to do so."

"With no serious intentions."

"We have no right to consider him dishonourable. He is young and vivacious; in Paris, he has no great plenty of ladies' society, among Germans, situated as he is; and it may be a pleasure to him now and then to chat with a handsome, well-educated girl of his own nationality, without feeling himself thereby involved in any way. On our part we must let him come. If we keep Elsa under lock and key, and let no young man come near her, until he has formally proposed for her hand, I am afraid we should do her a very poor service."

"Very good—if these visits do not cause our poor child her peace of mind."

"I don't think our Elsa would get singed so easily."

"That is something you can't be sure of. The child has a deeper nature than she herself knows. She is excited and absent-minded when he is coming, very animated when he is here, dreamy and silent after he is gone. You men don't see these things; but they do not escape a mother."

"I can only repeat, dear Käthe, what I said at first,

I hope and think that Herr von Brünne-Tillig is in earnest."

Frau Käthe shook her head in amazement. "The least that an officer expects," she said, "is the 'security,' and that is 60,000 marks, you know."

"But we have it, my child."

"Yes, but it is all that we have."

"What better use could we make of it?"

"Well, but there is Oscar ——"

"He shall be just as well provided for. Give yourself no anxiety. And now, dear Käthe, pleasant dreams!"

Frau Käthe could not at all understand these easy-going views; but for the moment there was nothing to be done but to blow out the candle.

At the end of this week of revelry, Brünne-Tillig at last took his leave. The whole family accompanied him to the railway station. He kissed Frau Käthe's hand ceremoniously, and then imprinted a rapid kiss upon Elsa's, as the girl extended it to shake hands with him. Astonished and embarrassed—for such a thing had never happened to her before—Elsa drew her hand away and blushed violently. Brünne-Tillig lifted his blue eyes to her's with an expression of gentle flattery that was most unusual to them, and said: "This has been a never-to-be-forgotten week, gracious Fräulein. We shall talk it over when we meet in Paris. You will permit me," he added, half turning toward the older people, "to pay my respects to you then and inquire after your health?"

Elsa cast down her eyes, and Koppel answered for her: "It will be a pleasure to us, Herr von Brünne-Tillig."

After his departure, Berck seemed very quiet. Every one noticed this, though with different feelings. The older people were pleased to return to the earlier tranquillity. Elsa was very silent and would linger in her own room if she had a reason or an excuse for going thither, and seemed rather to be occupied with her own thoughts than to be interested in the world outside; often she would sit before her aquarelle-paper

for fifteen minutes at a time, without touching it, her brush in her hand, her brown eyes lost in memories and dreams. Only by degrees she recovered herself; but her nature was too vigorous and elastic, her mind was too intelligently directed towards her art, for it to be possible that she should give herself up to an enervating regret for what was past or a profitless living it over again in imagination. Frau Käthe anxiously watched her daughter; she would have gladly taken the burden from the young heart; it was a grief to her that Elsa avoided making the slightest reference to that which unmistakably occupied her thoughts. But the strong young girl would have it out with herself alone, and she was able to do it. The mother felt a great relief when Elsa again splashed merrily in the sea-bath, whistled to the dogs who trotted past on the street, and ceased to sit by the hour alone in her room.

Singularly enough, Oscar seemed also to take Brünne-Tillig's departure much to heart. He was no longer lively, he preferred to be alone, he ceased to run and jump, and towards the end of August he went so far as to ask if it were not nearly time to return to Paris.

Koppel could not understand it. "Do you find your vacation too long?" he asked.

"It is no recreation to have nothing to do," the boy said.

"Young people are different from what they used to be," Koppel remarked; "when I was of your age, I should have been glad enough to go to the seashore and stay as long as I was allowed, and I should have very soon found something to do."

"This Berck is really too tiresome. There is nothing going on here. Paris is the place where one enjoys a vacation."

"That is nonsense, my lad. You have no appreciation for all the opportunities that are offered to you here. It would not be a bad idea, for instance, for you to learn to ride a bicycle, which you can do so easily here."



Oscar's face brightened. He had never thought of that ! At the Casino there was a bicycle school where a man gave lessons very cheaply, and where a wheel could afterwards be hired. And since his father had proposed it himself the boy lost no time in learning to ride. After a few lessons, his liking increased with his new proficiency, he became interested and ambitious, and was captivated by the machine. He no longer found the time wearisome, he spoke no more of wishing to return to the city, he was no longer peevish, and only tired out his sister with entreaties that she also would learn to ride, that they might fly together over the roads.

Near the close of September the poor woman with the invalid boy left Berck. The child had evidently improved, his transparent little face was less pallid and suffering, and the mother was full of encouragement as to his recovery. The Koppels learned her address in Paris, and Elsa secretly gave her a little money for the journey. It was the girl's intention to look after her a little in Paris also. With the thought, the image of the baroness also came before her mind. She scarcely knew how the thing would be arranged, but she had no doubt that the Baroness Agostini had a part to play in this affair. She had become so accustomed to recognize in the handsome, clever woman,—who seemed to others so cold and proud, and whom she knew to be so kind—a friendly Providence, ever ready to help.

And now, at last, their stay at the seashore drew to its close, for Oscar's school began shortly, and Koppel was due at the Wolzen establishment. Koppel looked back proudly over these eight weeks ; he had, for the first time in his life, really had the enjoyment of freedom, nothing had interfered with the carrying out of his plans ; he had been independent of circumstances and of persons. The oppressive cares and anxieties of earning a living had vanished out of his thoughts. He and his family had been undisturbed and happy creatures in the midst of nature ; they had been conscious of their own powers and inclinations, and had

been able to follow every lead that presented itself, without being hemmed in by the anxious question: "Can I? May I venture?" "And thus shall it ever be!" Koppel promised himself.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT OCCURRED IN OCTOBER.

THE Knecht family welcomed the return of the Koppels with many kind attentions, and the Masmajour family with heartfelt delight. And so, they were no longer lost in the great wilderness of Paris, strangers, without a friend, almost without an acquaintance, their coming and going a matter of importance to no single human creature! It gave them pleasure to see that they had a place in a few hearts, and it appeared to Koppel that he now, for the first time, had a citizenship here, where he had been hitherto only transiently a resident. All congratulated the family on their improved appearance. Even the old lady had evidently gained. They were all sunburnt and bright-eyed. Oscar had grown; his cheeks had lost their pallor, his upper lip had a darkly shaded down, which, without base flattery, could fairly be called a moustache.

The blonde Marie lost no time in introducing her Jean in his new array, the blue coat with metal buttons, with the intertwined initials, B. F. O., in silver embroidery on the collar, and the cocked hat with silver edge and cockade. The two invited their patrons to the wedding, which was to occur late in October. The young couple were so happy with each other and with looking forward to their wedding, that they spread joy around them and left it behind them wherever they went.

Elsa had much to relate to the Masmajours about

her life in Berck. She went into detail about everything except Brünne-Tillig's visit, which she passed over in silence. This gap, however, Oscar's narrative filled out, wherein the young officer figured as a lively, dashing fellow, a famous athlete, but not of high mental standing. As Oscar never spoke of him in Elsa's presence, she had no opportunity to correct this estimate, and the Masmajour girls felt a certain regret that a rough, commonplace fellow of that sort should attract the first fancy of so clever and sensitive a creature as their friend.

Adèle waited day by day for the mention of a certain name, but when this never came, she took courage to ask, as if casually: "How was it that your friend Henneberg never visited you in Berck?"

"I do not know," Elsa rejoined, innocently; "very likely he went to stay with the Baroness Agostini."

Then Adèle looked up sharply from her work. "Why do you say that?" she asked.

"But why should I not say it?" Elsa replied, astonished.

Adèle saw that the question was asked in perfect innocence. "I thought," she said, "that the gentleman being a friend, and having money enough to come and go as he pleased, would have wanted to spend a few days with your parents."

"I think he is more intimate with the Agostinis than with us. And they are in the same position he is. At their house he would find the kind of life that he is accustomed to. I do not know, however, that he has been at the Agostini's; I only conjecture it."

The conjecture was right. The Baroness Agostini had left Paris in the middle of July, and had gone to the château that she owned in Brittany, in the wildest part of Finistère near Penmarch on the granite coast of the Atlantic Ocean. It was the realization of her dream of a regal isolation: a two-story building in the Louis Quinze style, standing alone in fifteen hundred acres of park, oak-woods, and natural meadows and heaths. Before the sea-front of the house, which had two wings at right angles to it, was a small lawn with two

luxuriant flower-beds, to which a broad curving flight of steps led down from the windows of the dining-room; this lawn ended with a broad stone terrace having a balustrade of the Abbé-Waden form, and carved marble seats, each under its tent-shaped shelter; it looked out directly over the sea, whose wild, black waves rolled in at its foot and flung their foam in stormy weather at high tide over the balustrade and all across the terrace. The land-front of the château, with the imposing main entrance, was reached by an interminable avenue of grand old oaks, in whose presence one was impelled to take off his hat. To the right or left, the baroness could walk a half-mile, and, straight out, a mile and a half, over her own ground before reaching the granite wall, with its iron trellis and its deep moat, which for a length of four miles and a half protected the domain on three sides towards the land, while, on the fourth side, the ocean guarded it. A little river ran through the estate, at whose mouth there was quite a small harbour, where lay at anchor the expensive steam-yacht of the baroness. On the whole place, except the servants of the château and a few foresters whose cottages were near the enclosing wall, there was not a human being. When the châtelaine walked or drove, she encountered on her park-roads or in the paths under the trees or across the grass, no stranger face, and indeed, for the most part, no living creature except saucy, nibbling hares, and inquisitively watching deer, which by order of the baroness lived undisturbed by any gun.

During her stay in Finistère the baroness had almost always guests from town. At first came down, with the baron, Henneberg—who had been detained in Paris by the affairs of the quicksilver syndicate, till the beginning of August—and Count Beira. The latter remained only two weeks, and was followed by the Zagals and one of the directors of the French-Oriental Bank. Then came at different times, some club friends of the baron, the painter Pierre, and two other artists. The baroness so arranged it that there were never more than four guests at any one time; of

these, Henneberg was always one. He was constantly with her, but never alone with her. She was usually not visible till noon. The afternoon and evening she devoted to her guests. They walked and drove; there were excursions in the yacht as far as Audierne and Douarnenez in one direction, and Concarneau and Lorient in the other; there was fishing in salt water and in fresh. But no one might use a gun on the place. Outside the wall, however, the guests could have a chance at furred and feathered game. Repeatedly, from Quimper, and even from Brest, professionals were summoned to offer the little group the pleasure of piano music, string quartettes and singing.

On the whole, however, life was very quiet in the great château, in whose anterooms there were plenty of servants, it is true, but whose salons and guest-rooms were lifeless; and the house seemed to borrow, from the austerity of the sea and the melancholy of the heath, the character of both. It was half cloister, half *damenstift*; the life was ceremonious, quiet, and contemplative, with little concessions to an innocent enjoyment of nature and a sincere encouragement of art. Any one who was not, by social ambition or by relations of affection, attached to the baron or to the baroness, quickly fled from the proud tedium of this palace in the wilderness.

At the end of October, when the first sharp frosts withered the flowers on the heath, and autumnal storms scourged the sea to such a fury that its tremendous rote banished sleep from the house, the party returned to Paris. The special railway-carriage, which had awaited them at Pont l'Abbé, contained, beside the Agostinis, Henneberg, Pierre, an old marquis, a boyhood's friend of Agostini, and a famous Spanish violinist, who had been sent for from Bordeaux and had passed the last week at the château. He amazed with his music, which came out through the windows of the railway carriage, the station at Nantes, where the special waited for a hour to be added to the express train for Paris.

Three days after their arrival in town, Henneberg

was making ready to go out, one afternoon, when his servant announced a lady, desiring to speak to him.

"A lady?"

"Excuse me, monsieur le baron, an ordinary person, some one in service, perhaps."

"What does she want?"

"I do not know, monsieur le baron."

"Inquire."

The man went out, and shortly returned, saying: "It is the wife of a concierge, from the rue Raynouard. She comes from a monsieur Klein. She says, monsieur le baron will know who it is."

"Let her come in," cried Henneberg with alacrity. Dr. Klein! How completely, for months, he had forgotten the old man! It was too bad. What had become of him meanwhile?

"Well, what is your errand, my good woman?" Henneberg inquired, as the person announced entered, and, with a gesture, he indicated that she should sit down. They were in the oriental salon; the woman cast a rapid glance around her, and, as every seat which she saw seemed to her too magnificent, she preferred to remain standing.

"I thank you," she said, "I am not tired. Poor Monsieur Klein has had an accident. He was run over near the Trocadéro and lies helpless in his shed; you know?"

"Could he get home alone?" asked Henneberg, solicitously.

"Oh, no; two men brought him on a litter. He cannot move. They wanted to carry him to a hospital, but he would not allow it. You know what a man he is to do as he pleases. But we cannot let him lie there in his shed. And since he has no one, we remembered that you gave us permission to come to you, if anything made it necessary."

"Most certainly, my good woman. When did all this happen?"

"Just now. Not over two hours ago."

"Has there been a doctor called?"

"They took him into a druggist's shop at first, and

the man said he had broken something, but he could not tell certainly what. Then we had the doctor who lives near us, who said that he must go to a hospital, and that we must lose no time about it, for the old man was very much hurt."

Henneberg shook his head, much disturbed. "I will come at once, he said. "This is for you," and he gave her a five-franc piece; "I am very much obliged to you for coming to tell me."

The woman looked at the coin, and said diffidently: "I thank you. We have done what we could for Monsieur Klein. We paid the men who brought him home, and for a stimulant that the apothecary gave him, and the doctor will hold us responsible—"

"Did you tell Monsieur Klein what you had spent for him?"

"The poor gentleman! There would be no use in doing that; he has nothing."

Henneberg took out two twenty-five franc pieces from his *porte-monnaie*.

"Take one of these for the expenses you have already had and perhaps may have further. And give the other to Monsieur Klein himself, so that he may not be without money. For the rest, I will be responsible."

The woman went away, very grateful; and Henneberg sat down to reflect what it would be best to do. The Baroness Agostini had begged him always to let her accompany him when he went to visit Dr. Klein, but he decided in this case not to do as she had desired, although he knew that she took it very much amiss when she was not obeyed. He would first see for himself how the old man was situated, before he allowed the baroness to go the *rue Raynouard*.

He drove first to a famous surgeon's whom he knew, and then, accompanied by him, went out to Passy. The woman herself had not yet returned, but her daughter opened the door when Henneberg rang, recognized him very gladly, and said: "You have come to see the old gentleman? Father is with him now."

In the shed, whose emptiness astonished the sur-

geon, Dr. Klein lay upon his little bed, and with feeble voice was giving to the concierge, who was busied about him, directions of all kinds. When Henneberg appeared, the old man smiled up at him with the blue, child-like eyes, stretched out his trembling hands, and said, as energetically as he could : " My honoured patron ! What a surprise ! Pardon me, that I receive you in bed — "

" I know, Herr Doctor, what has happened—about the accident that you have met with. Your concierge's wife has been at my house — "

" What ! Did the good woman take upon herself to do that ? How did she dare to disturb you about such a trifle. "

" Be quite tranquil, dear Doctor. The Herr Professor, " and he introduced the surgeon, " will make an examination, and after that we will have a little talk together. "

Klein held the extraordinary old greenish, grayish, yellowish overcoat and the thin, brown woolen spread, fast with both hands. " Oh, no ; " he said, " oh, no ; Herr Professor, Herr Doctor, there is no need of that ; I am doing very well now ; all I need, is to be quiet for a little while. "

The surgeon disregarded this opposition ; he drew tenderly but decidedly the old coat and the coverlet out of the old man's grasp and threw them back, then for some minutes he silently touched and pressed, while Klein groaned or uttered a little cry every now and then, and between whiles begged their pardon ; and then the surgeon turned to Henneberg, saying : " There seems to be only a simple fracture of the right thigh, caused, I judge, rather by the fall than by the wheels. "

" Yes, I thought so ; I was sure it was a very simple thing, " Klein said, hastily drawing up the covering ; " in a few days I shall be up again. "

The surgeon made no reply to this remark, but went on : " Of course he cannot remain here ; we shall have to take him at once to a hospital. "

" No, no, Herr Professor, not that ! " Klein begged.

"Ah, let me stay here ! I will not leave my dwelling. Why should I go ? Nowhere can I be better off than here ! My honoured patron, you will not let me be taken away from here ?"

Henneberg was extremely distressed.

"Perhaps we can arrange it ?" he said, in a low voice, to the surgeon.

"It is not to be thought of," the other answered. "There are not even the barest necessities of life here."

"In an hour we will have everything here that you think desirable—furniture, carpets, curtains——"

"But the place can't even be heated——"

"A stove, pipes—everything can be had, if one is willing to pay for it. Also, a nurse, or several nurses,—whatever you order."

"No, my dear baron ; believe me. The noise of all this going on would be harmful. A good room in a private hospital is the only right thing."

"Do you know of one ?"

"Oh, yes."

The surgeon explained in a few words what he proposed to do, and went away, while Henneberg having placed his coupé at the other's service, remained with the patient till he should return. He tenderly sought to persuade Klein, but the old man would not listen. Finding after a time that there was no escape from the surgeon's decree he began to lament pitifully: "But my noble, most honoured patron, I cannot leave my room. The men—they meant well, but they were so rough—the men quite tore my trowsers, and I have none to put on."

He indicated with a melancholy smile a shapeless heap of mud-bespattered shreds on the floor, which the concierge had kicked out of the way on Henneberg's entrance.

Henneberg could not but smile himself, though his heart was very sad. "Just now," he said, "you could not put them on at any rate. We shall have to wrap you up. And, later, you shall have a new pair."

The concierge had withdrawn, seeing that Henneberg intended to remain. And now the wife appeared, somewhat out of breath. "I am a little late," she said; "my old legs—"

"You could not come on foot, as quickly as I in my carriage," Henneberg replied.

"What were you thinking about, to go and tell the Herr Doctor?" said Klein reproachfully and shaking his head at her.

"Don't be excited, Monsieur Klein; that is bad for you," the woman rejoined, coaxingly. She approached the bed, and slipped into his hand the gold piece, saying, in a whisper: "This is for you, from your friend."

Klein looked at Henneberg in amazement. The latter nodded, and said, while with a gesture he indicated to the woman to leave them alone: "Pardon me; it was inconsiderate to give this trifle to her for you instead of bringing it myself. It was my first impulse when I heard of your accident. I owe you a quantity of money still, for your translations."

"You owe me money? And you gave me a hundred francs in March! My work was not worth half of that."

"You said so, I know, and you would not take any more. But I value it differently."

"And what can I do with this money? I have a great deal more than I need. You can see for yourself, my honoured patron." He drew his overcoat toward him and began to feel in the breast-pocket. He did not find the object he sought and he attempted to lift the garment a little and shake it. But the motion caused him pain and he let it drop.

"What is it that you want to do?" Henneberg said, sympathetically.

"My purse was in the coat—my trousers' pockets are rather insecure—I thought it might have fallen between the outside and the lining, if you would be so good as to shake the coat a little—"

Henneberg took the garment, not without reluctance, and shook it, at arm's length. He did not do this with any violence at all, but an unexpected result

occurred. The cloth, rotten as tinder, gave way, and Henneberg, dismayed, saw part of it fly off into the corner of the room, while the other fragment remained in his hands.

Klein was for a moment, speechless, at sight of this disaster. Then he made an effort to recover himself, and said, with a painful smile, belied by the distressed tone of his voice, that the material was very poor; it was an old thing, and had done its work, like its master.

Henneberg laid the fragments on the bed, and said, consolingly: "Yes; the material was bad."

"I never had found it so," Klein said, with a momentary gleam of humour, and caressed, with affectionate fingers, the remains of the faithful old garment. "I think the purse is lost," he continued; "You see, my honoured patron, I have nowhere to keep your gold-piece. Neither a pocket nor a purse." He laid it on the little table near his bed. "I have always felt that with the invention of the pocket, evil first came into the world. Men did not appreciate their high place in the scale of existence when they made marsupials of themselves."

There was a good deal of delay before the surgeon returned. He was accompanied by two trained attendants, who brought a mattress-covered litter into the room. Also they brought sheets and a warm new coverlet. Klein again began imploring to be left at home, but, without attending to his remonstrances, they wrapped him in the coverlet and lifted him from his bed. He perceived that he must submit. "Let me take my things with me," he said.

One of the attendants assured him that he would find everything that he needed at the hospital.

"No, no," he said, "you do not know what I mean. I must take something with me. Lay me on the bed again, please."

The attendants did as he desired. The old man drew from under the pillow a small wallet which he concealed from sight as far as possible, and then, sigh-

ing and depressed, he allowed himself to be carried out.

In the street an ambulance was in waiting, which received the litter. Henneberg took the old man's hand in his: "I will see you very soon," he said; "All will go well." He then directed the concierge to take good care of the few books and papers that were left in the shed, which the latter promised faithfully to do.

And now, all this being done, Henneberg went to the baroness and related what had happened. She was extremely disturbed and wished to go the same evening to visit the old man. Henneberg dissuaded her from this, assuring her that the surgeon had probably not yet completed putting the leg in plaster, and that, in any case, Klein needed uninterrupted rest; but on the following day, in the forenoon, she drove to the hospital, which was under the charge of a religious order.

She found Dr. Klein in a cheerful little room whose two windows looked out into a large garden with many old trees, now leafless. He had been washed and shaven, his long, white hair had been carefully brushed, and he produced an effect of being better cared for than ever in his life before. At sight of the baroness he grew red with surprise and pleasure, and peeped in his high, but very feeble voice: "What! my most gracious Frau Baroness, you do me the honour!"

"Why, of course, Herr Doctor. Will you never think of me as a friend?"

"You are an angel, gracious Frau Baroness!"

"How do you feel, Herr Doctor?"

"I feel as if I were walled up. Such a plaster case makes one think of a coffin and a tomb."

"Don't think of anything so dismal."

"Why dismal? Death is an extremely interesting problem. For it is at once rest and change. It is going from arithmetic into algebra. It raises us to a common term after we have been, all our lives, separate factors."

The baroness was not quite sure whether his thought was extremely profound, or whether he was somewhat wandering. "Is there no one," she asked, "to whom you would wish to send word about yourself?"

Over his pale, long drawn-out face, as of a distressed Punchinello, there came a smile, which still further pushed out his chin and drew up the corners of his mouth; his blue eyes, a little clouded with a yellowish tinge, twinkled roguishly, as he replied in a mysterious tone: "That, gracious Frau Baroness, has been already done. We only need to think the message, and it makes its way through space to where it is understood."

The baroness looked at him compassionately. He continued: "You don't believe this, Frau Baroness? It is pure truth. A matter of experience. I have been comforted all my life long by these messages from those who were dear to me. You think of some one vividly, impulsively, apparently without any motive. That is simply a message from this person, coming out of space to your soul."

The baroness asked him if he were contented with the place. But at this he grew sad, and replied: "I should rather be at home. I miss the view over the Seine and the city. It is so amusing to follow the boats, or to fly from tower to tower. If I could only get away from here! And I do not like being idle. I want to go on with what I am doing. I was getting along well; but here they will not even let me have pencil and paper. *Ach!* my gracious Frau Baroness, if you would but do me the service!"

The baroness tranquillized him with a promise in general terms, and took her leave, not to fatigue him too much. Then she sought information from the brother of the order who attended her to her carriage as to what the surgeon had said. The man replied that the patient was extremely feeble. "It is only with the greatest difficulty that we can feed him," he added. "He has been for a long time accustomed to nothing but coffee and bread; he is not used to meat, and cannot bear it."

In the afternoon of the same day when Henneberg came to the hospital, he learned that Klein had died, an hour before. There was given to Henneberg a small object which the old man had had in his hands at the moment of death, the attendant said. It was an old, well-worn leather wallet, into one side of which Henneberg perceived, to his great surprise, was set a very ancient daguerreotype, and into the other side, carefully secured with a gold thread, a thin package of gilt-edged letters. The daguerreotype was extremely faded, but showed distinctly enough the face of a beautiful young girl, with large, expressive eyes, and hair in ringlets. The style of hair and dress were of somewhere near 1840. The upmost letter in the package was addressed to the *Stiftsrepetenten* Klein at Tübingen, and bore the postmark Stuttgart, but had no stamp. Henneberg felt himself by no means at liberty to read the letters. He put the package in his pocket, asked to take a last look at the old man, then went to the Baroness Agostini, to whom he announced the death of her protégé; and he showed her the case on which Klein's last look had rested.

The baroness gazed with surprise at the girlish face. Her eyes lingered long upon the lovely features, and at last she said: "So this old man had also his romance unsuspected by any one. Yet, no; that is not true. I did suspect it."

"Did you? The idea had never crossed my mind."

"Yes, I thought of it. The idea occurred to me that that man must have something in himself, making him indifferent to all things outside. His life had its roots elsewhere. So he could do without society and endure all privations. He asked nothing from realities, for he had his dream—a memory, or a hope."

Again she gazed at the shadowy face. Here was Klein's life-secret, the key to his existence; perhaps even to his philosophy. Who could tell how long the original of this picture had been dead? Were she living she would be now a wrinkled old woman. She had smiled, however, in fadeless youth upon Klein's

old age, and had shone upon him like sunshine, in the hour of death.

"Are we at liberty to read this romance?" Henneberg asked, indicating the little package of letters.

"Oh, no," the baroness rejoined quickly. "He was silent in his life, and we will not ask the secret now that his lips are shut. The picture shall be buried with him. The letters we will burn."

She went to the fire-place, where a wood-fire was blazing, unfastened the string which secured the letters, and dropped them one after another into the flames. There were but five in all. As they burned, the baroness said thoughtfully: "The flames augment, perhaps, the oscillations which this writing expressed. I remember Klein's theory of the eternity of thought. Perhaps we are making it easier for two emotions to meet in space and to blend into a unison which shall never again cease."

Henneberg watched her with brooding eyes, and it did not occur to him to smile at what she had said.

When the last sheet had been reduced to ashes, she sat down again upon the sofa, and said, almost as if speaking to herself: "And so,—one interest less in life! What will be left, at last?"

"Take your answer from Klein. At last, love is left. You need seek no other interest in life, when you have that."

"Ah, Henneberg, I dare not."

"Dare not? Who asks whether one dares, or not? One dares, because one must. With longing and lament, you go through life, while content is within the reach of your hand. Why do you persistently close your eyes to the fact?"

"I cannot tell. It is a kind of self-torture."

"If it were only that," escaped him, inconsiderately.

"But you torture me also."

"That is a part of my self-torture. Perhaps I have an unconscious need of doing penance."

"Penance! For what?" cried Henneberg. "For the wrongs that others have done you?"

"I have often asked myself the question in these

very words. We are such unreasonable creatures ; I am convinced that Fate has cruelly ill-treated me ; and yet, through this conviction pierces continually the feeling that I, also, have greatly sinned."

"And for that, you punish me," Henneberg said bitterly.

"Henneberg," the baroness rejoined, very gently, and she held out her hand to him as she spoke, "Your resentment is ingratitude. What I give you is more precious than what I refuse. You know that I think of you, by night and day ; that I could not endure to be without you ; that you are the bitterness and the sweetness of my life ; and that my self-respect depends upon the character of my relations with you. How can it be that you do not value this?"

"I value it as a pledge, as a promise ; but I am tortured with impatience till this promise is fulfilled."

"No more," she said sadly, but firmly ; and she rose from her seat. "Now will you go and carry back the picture, and have it laid in the coffin of our dead friend?"

Henneberg knew by experience that the conversation could not go on, when she spoke in the tone she had just now used. He put the daguerreotype in his pocket and went away.

When Klein was buried, the carriages of Henneberg and the baroness followed the hearse ; on foot went the concierge of the rue Raynouard, the charcoal-seller, whose books he had kept, and two grave-diggers, who chatted together as they walked along. Four persons stood around the open grave as the coffin was lowered into it. The Baroness Agostini, however, had not the feeling that the dead man was deserted. She remembered the girlish face that went with him under the ground.

On the day the old Suabian was carried to his last home through the streets of Paris, it happened that the blonde Marie celebrated her marriage with her Jean. The whole house took the liveliest interest in the event. The great publisher and the eminent

councillor sent rich presents and attended the ceremony. Adèle and Blanche Masmajour, for the first time since leaving Nîmes, were to have the pleasure of a supper and a dance, and their mother had allowed them new dresses for the occasion, moss-green and pink, of simple material, which they, however, with their artistic fingers, only slightly assisted by a professional dressmaker, had crinkled and folded in marvellous ways. The bride had thought at first about asking Elsa to be her bridesmaid, but Knecht had finally decided that the acquaintance was not sufficient to justify this. The Koppels, however, were treated with very special politeness at the banquet.

The wedding party attracted great attention, both at the civil marriage and at the church. Of the thirty persons, more or less, who composed the party, some dozen were old soldiers of the Cent Gardes; these sons of Anak stood head and shoulders above the average height. Thus collected together, every separate giant gained in self-consciousness and dignity. They kept step as they walked and involuntarily they assumed the old domineering air that they used to have when under arms. Their appearance was so extraordinary that a woman who saw them as they came out of the church, innocently inquired of another looker-on, if it was a wedding of *foraine foire* performers.

Not that their appearance, with the exception of their enormous height, was anything unusual. They were faultlessly correct in their attire—evening coat, white tie, patent-leather shoes, and silk hat. Only the hands caught one's attention, suggesting the idea it could not have been easy to find gloves for them. But they were specimens of a race of another pattern, and they had the feeling of this superiority when there were a sufficient number of them together.

The bride, under her white veil and with the wreath of orange-blossoms on her blonde head, looked very pretty, notwithstanding she was tall and slender as a young fir-tree. The man of her choice, though of average height, reached only to her eyebrows, but her pleasant rosy face with its blue eyes betrayed so much

good nature and happiness that the idea of her being the superior of the two, the one to take the lead, never occurred to anybody's mind.

Happy as she was on this day, she still had one little disappointment to bear. Her family had decided that the weather was too cool and too uncertain for an expedition to the Lake in the Bois de Boulogne to be advisable; and, in the arrangement of the festivities, this was accordingly omitted. The bride had to content herself without it, although, to her, the triumphal drive in the white-satin-lined wedding-coach seemed almost more important for the suitable observance of the wedding-day, than going before the mayor or the priest. And now, as it happened, the late autumn day was sunny and mild, and the drive in bridal array might just as well have taken place! But it was all settled, and could not be altered; and the bride, with a certain regret, must be satisfied with her dinner and subsequent dance, in the hotel at Porte Maillot.

At table, Frau Käthe sat on one side of Monsieur Knecht, who, in his dress coat, with a ribbon in his button-hole,—the ribbon of his military decoration—would have seemed, to an uninstructed stranger, much more like an officer of high rank in evening dress than the concierge that he was; while Madame Knecht, who betrayed her calling much more plainly, had at her right a former staff-officer of the Hundred Guards, and at her left, Koppel. The entertainment was a lordly one, with a fish-course, three courses of meat, a sherbet in the middle, and ices at the end. There was lacking neither Bordeaux nor Burgundy, nor yet Champagne. Frau Käthe, who had never attended a French wedding before, wondered at this luxury, and considered it, in the case of rather poor people, as something objectionable. She could not help saying as much to Elsa after they had left the table. But Elsa rejoined, smiling, "I think, on the contrary, that it is something very sweet, that even a poor working girl, for once in her life, on her wedding-day, can feel as if she were a princess. Even if she were to suffer from want the day after, it is not paying too dear for



something to remember. See, mamma, this is real equality, and for that, anyone ought to be willing to pay."

Elsa took a few steps in the first polonaise with the bridegroom, not to seem proud, then refused further invitations on the plea that her foot hurt her a little, and remained with her mother. Madame Masmajour and Adèle came also to sit with them. Blanche, however, danced all the time, and always with Oscar, to whom she had engaged herself for every number.

The bride, for politeness' sake, must waltz once around the hall with all the most honoured guests, first with her father's former superior officer, then with Koppel, then with Masmajour. When she had performed this duty she worried herself about the young ladies of the house, who, greatly to her surprise, were enacting the part of wall-flowers, and she wished to introduce partners to them. As she did not succeed in this, either with Elsa or Adèle, she devoted herself personally to them, and came to sit, in every pause between the dances, alternately at the side of one or the other.

In talking with Adèle, she related, among other things, that she, with her Jean, went to see Baron Agostini, to thank him for the appointment; that he had, smiling, presented her to the baroness, and that the latter had received her very kindly, inquired into their circumstances, and had promised to be god-mother to her first child. Also, that the baroness had sent her, as a wedding-present, some beautiful silver for the table, and what made the gift especially precious was the card accompanying it, in which reference was made to Jean's honourable conduct in regard to the package found in the Luxembourg, an account of which had been given her by the Koppels. The blonde Marie was extremely enthusiastic about the baroness, but, added inconsiderately, like the true concierge's daughter that she was, that she could not believe what they all gossiped about at the bank, that the baroness had had a very singular past, and that she was now very intimate with Baron Henneberg, who often visited the Koppels.

Adèle shrank back as the bride chattered on, and pressed her lips so tight together that they were but a painfully curved line. No sooner had the blonde Marie departed to dance a little more, than Adèle whispered to her mother that she had a headache and desired to go. Madame Masmajour became quite troubled, noticing herself that the girl looked pale and depressed, and hastened to find her husband and tell him that they were going home. Masmajour was not very ready to leave just then, for he had found a guardsman, now in a position at Tattersall's, who thought quite as badly of the Republican government as he did himself. The two were soon engaged in high political talk which filled the little, thin man and the broad-shouldered giant with great mutual admiration. Masmajour was far the more fluent of the two, and he was enjoying, with heartfelt delight, the impression which his words produced upon the rapt listener, when his wife appeared and interrupted the flow of his eloquence. He would most willingly have prolonged the conversation ; but he was accustomed to obey ; and, with a sigh, he parted from the sharer of his opinions.

It was more difficult to reach Blanche. She whirled like a top in Oscar's arms, and had no eyes for the frequent beckoning of her mother, who did not wish to make it too conspicuous that they were about to leave. It was necessary to wait till the dance was over before the girl could be withdrawn from the circle of dancers. She made a wry face on hearing the words : " We are going home ! " and Oscar ventured to remonstrate timidly. He begged of Madame Masmajour that Blanche should be left a little longer under his mother's care ; but just then Frau Kathe, who had observed that the Masmajours were going to leave, announced that she would go with them ; and so, much to their grief, Oscar and Blanche were obliged, also, to quit the ball.

The first thing Adèle did, on reaching home, was to take her picture out of its handsome frame, and, without making any answer to the surprised inquiries

of her mother and Blanche, carry it upstairs and give it back to Elsa.

"But why?" Elsa asked, in astonishment.

"I have decided that it is not right for me to accept so valuable a present from madame la baronne."

"This suddenly occurs to you, to-day, after four months?"

"While you were at the seashore, I could not return it to you."

Neither Elsa nor her mother could understand the girl's caprice. They sought to persuade her, but Adèle said in her quiet, persistent way, "Please don't urge me;" she laid the frame on the table, and left the room. The Koppels thought the act a little eccentric, but regarded it as the result of somewhat overstrained, yet really creditable, sensitiveness on the part of people who had been unfortunate, and whose pride had been intensified by their poverty.

Madame Masmajour had the pastel re-framed at a shop near by. A few days' delay occurred before it was brought back, and meanwhile Blanche missed it extremely, having been accustomed to see it in the little salon which they used as a workroom.

"Such an empty place on the wall where one has been accustomed to see a dear picture," she said, the next morning as she sat down at her work, "is almost as sad as a death in the house."

Madame Masmajour crossed herself in horror. "It is wicked for you to say that, my child," she exclaimed. "Adèle is here alive and well; is it not enough to have the original?"

"The pastel is prettier than the original," Blanche said, to tease her sister.

"That is not true," Madame Masmajour rejoined and kissed Adèle tenderly; after which, she went into the bedroom to attend to Monsieur Masmajour.

"You were wrong to give the frame back," Blanche went on, when their mother had left the room; "it was a present to you from Elsa, where she got it doesn't concern you in the least. It suited you so

well. Among the sword-lilies, you looked like Mireille!"

"Mireille died of a broken heart," Adèle said softly.

Blanche heard the remark, however. "I believe," she ran on, "you have a dislike to the Baroness Agostini——"

"Don't speak of the woman!" Adèle exclaimed, with so much energy that Blanche started.

"You frightened me. I almost pricked my finger," she complained, and remained for a time silent.

Adèle, meanwhile, was following out her own thoughts, and she could not restrain herself from saying—thinking aloud, rather than speaking to her sister: "How can a man be so false! Why should he have wanted my picture when he is in love with that woman!"

"But, Adèle," cried Blanche, with honest indignation, "I can't imagine how you can keep thinking of that tiresome old fellow!"

"Everybody cannot be taken up with a green school-boy," retorted Adèle, much displeased.

Blanche coloured violently and looked at her sister without saying a word. Not for some minutes did she find any reply to make. At last she said: "What do you mean by that?"

"You know very well what I mean."

It was true. She did know very well. But she believed her secret so deeply hidden that she could not understand how Adèle had discovered it. In her confusion and distress, she laid down her work, went around the table, sat down at Adèle's side, put her arm around her sister's neck and said very softly: "Are you angry?"

"Not at all," rejoined Adèle, and freed herself gently.

"There is nothing the matter?"

"I hope not. But you have not been very frank."

Blanche returned to her seat and busied herself again with her work. But she thought over her sister's reproach. Did she really deserve it? When had she begun to practice concealment? When had there

been a time to confide in her sister? It had all come about so gradually, so unnoticed! Elsa and Oscar had been their only daily associates since the Masmajours came from Nîmes. Elsa was more attracted by Adèle and the mother. It was natural that she herself should be more intimate with Oscar. It happened accidentally that, when they were all out walking, or were sitting together upstairs in the Koppels' parlour, or here in their work-room, that she and Oscar would chat together while Elsa and Adèle talked with each other. He was such a handsome and lively fellow, so full of originality, so kind and obliging towards her! He had always a flower or a paper of bonbons or an interesting book for her; and it seemed to her, at last, that these little attentions between neighbours, between young people of the same age, between good and true friends, were matters of course; that it was a right for her to receive them, as it was to him a pleasure to offer them.

At first, they saw each other only when they all were together. After awhile, there awakened in both a great desire to meet alone, if but for a moment. Blanche would arrange it frequently to be on the stairs or at the door, when Oscar came or went, and there would be a rapid clasp of hands and the interchange of a cordial word. Soon this was so essential to Oscar that, with any kind of an errand or without any at all, he would go to the Masmajours', if he failed to meet Blanche on the stairs, and she would usually accompany him to the door when he left, and he would have the opportunity to take her slender hand in his. Since the spring, he had made it a practice to spend all his leisure time out of school, with the Masmajour sisters. He neglected the comrades with whom he had been accustomed to exchange visits on Sundays and Thursdays; he passed whole afternoons with the girls, reading aloud to them, much to their gratification, while they were at work. It never occurred to Madame Masmajour to object to this, which went on under her eyes, and was, manifestly, the most innocent thing in the world.

The trip to the seashore caused distress to Oscar and to Blanche. They had looked forward to Oscar's holidays, with hopes of which they themselves were scarcely aware. It seemed to them that they could be together much more than heretofore, and differently, with excursions into the country, with returns in the twilight, in wood-roads, in railway-carriages, —where they might walk arm-in-arm, where they might sit very near each other. All this they were now to be deprived of. To be separated, for the first time since they had known each other, caused them both great pain. They promised to write to each other, *poste restante*, for Oscar felt that he should want to say a great deal that the rest of the family would have no need of reading. This made much trouble and danger for Blanche. She was almost never alone. She had no room of her own, but shared the same bedroom with Adèle. And when she went out it was always in the company of her mother or father. She was able, however, to persuade her mother to let her carry home hats alone, if the mother were otherwise occupied. Then she would hasten to the post-office station, get her letters, and answer them on the spot, there at the desk in the office, with a few hurried lines. The secrecy, the haste, the excitement over doing a stealthy act, the humiliation at the offensive and derisive look of the clerk from whom she had to receive the letters, confused her extremely, and gave to what she wrote in reply a warmth and anxiousness that might almost have been called passionate, had not the range of her ideas been so innocent. Oscar could write with the greatest freedom, for in his room in Berck there was no one to look over his shoulder, and his letters were the frank expression of a brimming heart. This was love; distinctly, ardent love; extravagant conceits of fancy, it is true, as well, but in their shy ecstasy burned all the fire of a scarcely conscious, awakened manhood.

The letters, the poems which were almost always enclosed, stirred Blanche's heart to its depths, and produced in her a sort of intoxication, which lasted for



days, and was renewed and heightened by each successive letter as it came. Then awakened by degrees in her, a consciousness of wrongdoing, and she reproached herself for practising concealment towards her own family, especially towards her sister. But she did not find courage to entrust to Adèle the secret of her inexpressibly precious correspondence.

And when Oscar returned from the seashore, when they met she gave a little cry, which happily no one heard, and her hand shook as she extended it in greeting. That evening, without a word having been said, he was on the stairs, sure that she would come. When she came, he put his arms out unconsciously, and unconsciously she rushed into them. He covered her hair with kisses, and he would have kissed her lips, but she tore herself away from him, and, in agonizing terror of being caught by some servant, ran back into the apartment as if haunted by a malicious ghost. The embrace had lasted no longer than a flash of lightning. But, like a flash, it had left its trace of fire. The next time, when he—in the presence of others, indeed, but not overheard by them—could talk with her in a low voice, he used the *tu* instead of *vous*, and she did not even notice it, it seemed so natural to her, and used the same to him in return, without effort, without shyness, as if she had never done anything else. And at the wedding of the blonde Marie, the rapturous excitement swept them both away utterly. For full half an hour he had his arm about her, for half an hour he could talk to her without restraint, without fear of being overheard, without being embarrassed by any one's notice. Blanche scarcely knew where she was nor who were near her, she whirled above the clouds in a paradise of music and tender words, while to Oscar it was as if he must shout aloud, in his joy at having the dear girl so near, so loving, so much his own.

Of the unknown, undreamed-of, the almost alarmingly overmastering emotions of that half-hour, Blanche still thought, and she saw, with self-reproach, that Adèle had with right accused her of dissimulation. But she went no further than self-reproach ; she made

no attempt to repair the wrong. She could not bring herself to tell her sister of the correspondence, of the familiar *tu*, of the rapture of the waltz, and she only said impulsively : "What have you been thinking?"

"My poor Blanche," Adèle rejoined, "you have no idea what happens to you when Oscar comes in. I should be blind, indeed, not to see it."

"Do you think that mother notices anything?" the other asked anxiously.

"Sooner or later, she will notice it, if you don't get this nonsense out of your head."

Blanche again sprang from her seat, and threw herself into her sister's arms. "We are doing nothing wrong," she said; "why should we not be friends? You do not want to separate us." Her brown eyes were wet with tears, and Adèle felt her sister's heart throb wildly.

"Be reasonable, you foolish child," she said, and stroked the heavy dark hair. "I am not going to do you any harm. You are two silly children. I shall keep watch over you. You are not rational."

She said this in a kind voice, sympathetic, like a grandmother's, this girl, who was fourteen months older than her not yet eighteen years' old sister!

CHAPTER XIII.

A HAPPY WINTER.

THE winter succeeding this autumn was, to Koppel, a period of happiness beyond anything he had ever before known, even in the time of his betrothal and early married life; for though his emotions in that never-to-be-forgotten summer and autumn were both more intense and more distinctly blissful, still, he was burdened at that time with anxiety about the future, and with a sense of the responsibility which he had incurred; while now his happiness, though more tranquil, was

free from any such oppression ; so that, unencumbered, like a bird in the air, he swept lightly above the little occurrences of the day, and, secure in his destined freedom, looked down upon his present life and forward into the time to come.

His mother, notwithstanding her advanced age, was in firm health ; his wife was always happy, his children were more and more a satisfaction to him every day. Oscar had grown very rapidly in the last few years, and now his physical development seemed to be slower, and it was probable he had reached his full stature. His mental development, however, was very noticeable all the time. His ambition had received its first gratification. The *Idéal* had printed some of his poems ; in his proud diffidence he did not mention the fact at home, but Elsa discovered it by repeated questionings, and it was she who exhibited to the Masmajours and to her parents her brother's victorious signature in the plum-coloured magazine. He soon became closely and permanently connected with this periodical. The poems were followed by critical essays, philosophical meditations, imaginative pieces, which excited attention in extremely "young" circles, and soon opened to their author the pages of the other magazines, which among literary school-boys were especially esteemed—namely, the *Symbole*, the *Vie esthétique*, even the *Revue pourpre*.

After three months of furious industry in which he lavishly gave forth the collective first impressions of a new soul, another young fellow appeared who wrote an account of his life and a critical dissertation on his works. Then Oscar had the pleasure of reading in the *Idéal* that he was one of the hopes of the world-literature of the twentieth century ; that he was a new and fascinating compound of delicate, silver-cloud-like German romance, and steadfast French accuracy and intellect ; that he represented an experiment in grafting the cultured scion of Latin subtlety upon the luxuriant wild growth of German intensity ; and that the further result of this experiment was awaited with extreme interest. In the matter of honorarium he

was not much troubled, as yet ; but instead of vulgar mammon, he received nobler compensations. Half a dozen newspapers sent him free copies. Budding authors sent him their first books with striking inscriptions. He received tickets to picture-shows, invitations to performances by theatrical societies, even the *Vigie de la Presse* began to send him yellow envelopes, with numbered clippings from newspapers concerning himself, which, in the first three months, beginning with December, amounted to seven.

It was not easy to determine whether his earlier successes were making him vain, or not. He remained, at home, taciturn and shy. He did not talk with his own family about the subject which presumably occupied his mind. But the little that he did say betrayed self-consciousness and confidence in his own opinion, and frequently also, perhaps unconsciously to himself, the gently sarcastic superiority of a youth of the very highest culture over well-meaning, personally dear barbarians, who were excluded from the latest intelligence.

Elsa, on her part, worked diligently and confidently at her art. She increasingly felt that she was no amateur, but truly had a vocation. In a distance, which no longer seemed to her inaccessible, she saw herself attempting the highest artistic tasks and mastering all means of expression, the use of oils included. At present, she did what lay next at hand, executing in chalks or aquarelle some of the sketches which she had made at Berck. Late in the autumn she had gone with her mother to see the Baroness Agostini, who had manifested much pleasure at meeting them again. They had talked about the summer journeys, Elsa had given some account of her impressions, and the baroness had begged to see her sketches. Elsa accordingly sent the portfolio, and the baroness had begged to keep it for a few days.

Then came a list of orders. The baroness desired, in a size which she indicated, the mother with the sick boy on her lap ; Count Beira, a picture representing the Koppels and Brünnc-Tillig

in the moonlight on the sands ; Kohn would have a merry, daylight bathing scene ; a friend of the baron's at the club desired the pathetic scene of the little lame children in the water. This gave her work for many weeks, and was so well paid for that she was almost overpowered. The baroness gave her two thousand francs for the aquarelle ; and, in all, the four works brought her in five thousand, two hundred francs. In possession of all this wealth, she decided not to mention the original of her picture to the baroness, but herself gave to the poor woman one-fourth of what the aquarelle had brought her in. To her brother at Christmas she gave an expensive bicycle ; to her mother one of those watches worn on the breast like an order, which at that time were much in fashion. Frau Käthe reproached her for her extravagance, but the girl laughed : " I get it so easily ! And when this is gone, I know where to find more ! "

She now began to feel the need of a studio that she could make a delightful place. She painted for herself a sketch of the room, with divans, and white bear and tiger skins, and East Indian silk hangings, at sight of which Frau Käthe could only shake her head and say : " If people can pay for all this magnificence, perhaps they have the right to have it. " It chanced that Madame Zagal about this time made a call in the rue Saint-André-des-Arts, made a few drawling remarks to Frau Käthe and Elsa, in her indescribable South American French and went away. Mother and daughter were unable to account for this extraordinary visit, till a fortnight later the riddle received its explanation. Madame Masmajour, recommended to the General's wife by the Baroness Agostini, was doing some work for her, and on carrying home the hat which had been ordered, was told confidentially by the gingerbread-coloured lady, that she had intended having her portrait painted by Elsa, since the young artist had been so highly praised by the baroness, but that she had not felt willing to give the order on going to the house and seeing the poverty-stricken aspect of things ; it was impossible to be an artist, Madame

Zagal thought, if one had not a studio. Elsa laughed with the Masmajours over this perhaps Indian standard of artistic ability, but the incident was not without significance. Koppel begged, however, that the matter should be left undecided for a little while ; there would soon be other changes to be made in their surroundings, and the question of an atelier could be settled at that time.

They were his pride, Oscar and Elsa ; and in a degree, his humiliation. Oscar, in his eighteenth year, had risen into notice, as he himself scarcely dared still hope to do ; and Elsa had received for her first attempts, which seemed to be almost made in play, a recompense exceeding what his own dull, hard year's work brought in. For both of them life was full of brilliant promise. To them would come all the successes of which he had dreamed in his youth, and he said to himself with a certain sadness, from which affection had taken the sting, that he must become accustomed to the thought of regarding the two successful children as the better part of himself, the *raison d'être* of his own existence. He did not disdain to widen his own intellectual interests by their new endeavours. For the sake of his son he read carefully and extensively the "young" books and periodicals, not much to his edification, it is true, but with a fair amount of interest and without impatience. The obscurity, the inanity, the inelegant affectations, the frantic conceit, the pose of shattered nerves and debased morals in these insignificant writings, were radically offensive to him, but his mood became indulgent toward them when he remembered that the youths who took pleasure in these hot-headed productions were the friends and admirers of his son, and had the same enormous opinion of him that they had of themselves. Koppel would, indeed, have been sorry to have Oscar persevere in this course, to which he at present adhered because, in his circle, it was the style ; but of this, the father never for a moment stood in fear. The boy would become more mature, he thought ; then, this would cease of itself ; as soon as he should be in Ger-

many, and enter upon a different and more wholesome intellectual life, his mental horizon would also become very different and he would no longer babble as a mystic, but would speak outright like a man.

And as, following on his son's track, he thus made his way into a kind of literature which would otherwise have forever remained unknown to him, so through his daughter he came into relations with the art of the day. He sought the society of Pierre, and, through him, obtained acquaintance with other painters, gained admission to their ateliers and kept track of their work. He visited all picture-shows at the dealers and at clubs; attended the art-school exhibitions of works by students who were competitors for the *prix de Rome*, and of works sent from Rome by students who had received this prize; and in this way it happened that he revisited the Hôtel Drouot, not to be himself a bidder at auctions, but attending sales of pictures that he might form an idea of the state of the art-market.

Also the theatre attracted him. In all the twelve years of his life in Paris, he had been with his family not over a dozen times to witness the performance, at Sunday matinées at the Théâtre Français or the Odéon, of classic dramas, with which his children ought to become acquainted. During this winter he devoted at least one evening in the week to dramatic entertainments, as well in the irregular theatres frequented by his son's friends, as in the first houses of the boulevards. Occasionally the Baroness Agostini offered him her box at the Grand Opéra, or at the Opéra Comique.

Frau Käthe could not really tell how she stood towards the baroness. On the one hand, the latter was constantly doing kind things towards them; on the other hand, she seemed to desire no closer relations with them. In the newspapers they often read of great dinners and receptions at the Agostinis, but the Koppels had never been a second time invited. The baroness not unfrequently asked Frau Käthe and Elsa to come to see her, she sent her carriage for them, she welcomed them with the most affectionate friendliness



but it was evident that she did not wish to be seen with them publicly, and, the evenings when she offered them her box at the opera, she was never there herself. Frau Käthe regarded it as arrogance, and was inclined to be offended. Elsa, however, talked her out of this. She could not, herself, understand the motive of this conduct, but she was perfectly sure that the baroness was not ashamed of them. She was an uncommon person and one must not take offence at what she did. And so the family accepted the courtesies offered them, and on their opera nights either took with them two of the Masmajours, or invited Brünne-Tillig, who, in this case, came first to supper.

Koppel began now, for the first time, to appreciate the intellectual pleasures of Paris, in which hitherto he had had no share. He gained, with surprise and delight, an insight into the inexhaustible wealth of artistic suggestions of every kind with which life in Paris overwhelms the receptive mind, and he regretted the many years that he had been obliged to let pass unprofitably and his enslavement to the duties of his vocation, which still held him closely confined. He lightened his work as much as possible, and found time for his new interests—the theatre, his wanderings among studios and exhibitions, his reading of the objectionable “new” books and periodicals—by giving up all his private pupils, and he only continued his work in the school because that was a matter of contract.

Wolzen and the other teachers, his colleagues, were very much surprised when they found that Koppel, at the beginning of the winter semester, relinquished the profitable extra instruction of the richer pupils of his classes and also his courses of lectures for advanced girls. This was advantageous to the other teachers, for they quickly divided among themselves the opportunities of gain which he abandoned, but they gossiped much nevertheless, and with an undertone of unfriendly jest, over the new manners of a gentleman of leisure which they observed in their comrade, and they set on foot all sorts of rumours as to the cause of his sudden

prosperity. One man believed that Koppel had won a great prize in a lottery ; a second knew that he had received a fortune by inheritance ; a third had heard it whispered about that Koppel's daughter earned a great deal of money as an artist ; and the talk was endless when a somewhat idle colleague of Koppel's tried to borrow some money of him, and, without the slightest exertion, actually obtained a hundred francs.

It was also to Frau Käthe a great surprise that her husband gave private lessons no longer, and though she delicately avoided the air of seeming to fear that her daily bread was in peril, or of reproaching the head of the family with not being sufficiently industrious, or of urging him to greater exertions, she could not, however, refrain one day, as he was going with her and Elsa to an exhibition of pictures, from saying : " Pardon me, Hugo, for speaking of it, but have you lost all your private pupils this winter ? "

" Lost ? " he said smiling. " No, my dear Käthe. I have given them up. I wanted to have a little more time to devote to you and Elsa. One does not live merely to toil and moil. "

" Certainly not. If only there were no such thing as a scarcity of money, which we cannot forget, in our grandeur of soul. "

" Do not feel anxious, sweetheart, " Koppel replied tranquilly.

Frau Käthe said no more, but anxious she was, notwithstanding the peace of mind so evident in her husband, the cause of which she could not fathom.

Koppel had indeed good ground for cheerfulness. His securities rose without interruption. At New Years the price of Almaden was 790 francs. He had gained nearly a quarter of a million and, including his wife's inheritance, he had now over 300,000 francs. What had seemed a far-off, nebulous hope, when he began to speculate, was now, in less than a year, very nearly realized. The goal that he had proposed to himself was within arm's length. He must begin to consider the question how—in the no longer remote day when he should enter permanently on the blessed

condition of a man of independent means—he should invest his property. An estate in the country? That would be best of all, he thought, a return to mother Earth! The practice of husbandry, refreshing to body and soul! All the sunshine of the "Bucolics" which he was at this time teaching daily in the school overflowed his soul. But—was it not too late, thus to change one's vocation? The earth brought in small returns; to cultivate it required knowledge of various kinds whose acquisition would now be too tedious. A dwelling house, then? Not a bad idea. But where? If he bought, he fettered himself; and it would require, too, that he should come at once to a decision whether he would return to Berlin, or would remain in Paris; and this was a momentous, a formidable question not to be settled off-hand.

The simplest thing after all was to buy good, interest-bearing securities. That left him entire liberty to order his life as it might please him, later. But what securities? Governments? But who could tell, on the morrow of a declaration of war, what they would be worth? And the enormous expenses of military defence were, even in peace, ruining, more slowly but no less surely, all the states of Europe. American securities, then? They were less oppressed by the military spirit, but it was impossible from here to watch over such investments properly, and new communities were subject to business crises, unknown in the old world. It was singular—when he gave orders for transactions at the Bourse it never occurred to him to search into the lasting, intrinsic value of what he bought: it did not appear that this value concerned him at all; the buying of these securities was not a real purchase of property, and he had none of the usual care attending a purchase; now, however, when he began to think about investing what he had gained, among all the quotations of the Bourse, there did not seem to be one which offered him the absolute safety that he required; even in the case of the very best he found some objection which made him hesitate. And amidst his inquiries, and investigations,

and criticisms, came to him the thought, "Perhaps the socialists are wrong in considering the man of independent fortune as exempt from cares; it is not so easy, after one has gained a competency, to keep it and administer it wisely."

Pfiester, in these days, came frequently again to Koppel and sought to induce him to new ventures. He found it incomprehensible that his customer, for so long a time, did nothing. It is true, twice in the month the *remisier* had his share of the broker's commission, which every time the position was adjusted had to be paid, and this was quite a respectable, regular revenue, for which Pfiester had no occasion so much as to lift a finger. But that did not content him. Koppel's indebtedness to the broker became less constantly, as he took up a certain number of shares at every settling-day. And thereby Pfiester's share in the commission was reduced. And since Koppel, for over a twelve-month, had been steadily gaining, it was a shame that he should let his good money lie unprofitable, and torpidly sit down on it, instead of letting it run merrily about in new ventures, to the great profits of brokers, *coulissiers*, and *remisiers* who, at each venture, get their commission, whatever their customer gains or loses. Koppel, however, resisted obstinately. He had his own ideas. When Pfiester continually inquired whether he was not going to sell his Almaden, the whole or part of it, he replied: "I should be insane to do that. Did you not tell me, yourself, that it would reach 1000? I am waiting till it does. I am in no hurry."

"You certainly are not, Herr Doctor. I admire you. I hold up your splendid coolness as an example to all my customers—without mentioning your name, of course. Most people who have dealings with the Bourse are nervous, they change their minds half a dozen times a day, they are frightened at every breeze, they bombard me with orders, changes and recalls. From you, I hear nothing. You are like a marble statue."

"It is no merit of mine," Koppel said, modestly, "it is a matter of temperament."

"It is a merit however to have the temperament of a field-marshal," remarked Pfister with a bow. "What I complain of is that you do not take sufficient advantage of your splendid temperament. Your Almadens will go up to a thousand I believe myself; and you are right quietly to await your selling price. But that is no reason for remaining idle in the meantime. Why not take some of the opportunities that are constantly presenting themselves?"

"Such as what?"

"At this moment there is a great movement going on in ruble-Russians. I advise you most strongly to go into this. You have had reason to know that my former advice was not bad."

Koppel became attentive and desired further information. The security of which Pfister spoke was a domestic loan, bearing five per cent., interest payable in paper. Pfister said that it was generally believed that this five per cent. paper bond would shortly be converted into a four per cent. gold one, in which case it would have the same value as the other Russian four per cents which now stood at 92 or 93, and were sure very soon to reach 100. The ruble-Russians had, indeed, risen already, on rumour of this conversion, but it would be some time before all the cream was skimmed.

Koppel left Pfister with the promise that he would reflect on this advice. As his custom was, he began to read about the security in his year-books of the Bourse. Its past was noticeable. A few years ago the price had been from 50 to 55, it was now above 80. But Russian finances had greatly improved, and if the security really should become gold-bearing, it was, even at its present price an extremely good purchase. The more he examined this security, the more attractive it seemed. It was, perhaps, exactly what he sought! As safe as any public loan in Europe, and paying higher interest than any that were equally safe. He thought it over for two days, during which

time the ruble-Russians continued to rise, and he then decided to give an order for the purchase of 100,000. He was obliged to pay 86 for them. This signified—the ruble being reckoned on the Bourse at about four francs—that he bought for 344,000 francs securities from which he expected to receive 16,000 francs income. He scarcely felt at all that he was undertaking a new speculation; he simply invested two-thirds of the half million and more that he had if he sold his Almadens. This half million he regarded as already his undoubted property. It was simply not at this moment available. It was an entirely justifiable act for a careful, circumspect head of a family not to delay the permanent investment of this half million until he had in his hands the ready money, but to buy a security which could be obtained at the moment on peculiarly advantageous terms.

It did not particularly disturb him that immediately after he had bought, which he did at the highest price reached, the Russians went down sharply, in a few days, to 80. He again, with pride, observed his own coolness, when on settling day, he had to pay about 25,000. The Bourse might begin its St. Vitus's dance, he should be calm. More than that: after many hours' fatiguing mental calculation he gave an order to Pfister to buy 100,000 more at 80. Thus his average price for the 200,000 was 83. They cost him 644,000 francs. Who could tell—perhaps he might keep the whole, and so have 32,000 francs income, which would be abundantly sufficient for the kind of life that he had planned. If not, he would sell, after the completion of the Almaden affair, as many of the Russians as he had not the money to pay for, and in this way also would gain something.

Pfister highly commended Koppel's brave decision in making a favorable average price for his Russians. "You confirm my long-standing conviction," he said, "that a man can earn money at the Bourse only when he is not present there in person. A thousand exciting rumours are constantly buzzing around us, which alarms us. One man says this; another that; and we

end by not knowing what to think ourselves. You, on the contrary, sit quietly at home, are led astray by no chatter, and decide on matters by your own unbiassed experience and reason. I wish, Herr Doctor, that I were as sure of my million as you are!" This was all very cheering and Koppel willingly believed what Pfister said.

Rapidly the winter passed with the Koppel family, and its unusual severity was hardly noticed by them in their elated consciousness of prosperity and success. There was a new excitement in their lives. Koppel enjoyed the moment, and he still more enjoyed the future which was to bring the satisfaction of all his wishes and dreams for himself and his family. Frau Käthe was conscious, without understanding the cause of it, that something different was around her. There was no longer in the others anxious depression and narrow absorption in petty cares for the earnings and needs of the hour, but a consciousness of individuality, a breathing freely, a widening of the outlook. Her housekeeping, whether with her consent or without it, went on after a different fashion; the frequent suppers—to which were invited Brünne-Tillig, the Masmajours, Pierre, other artists and, now and then, young authors of Oscar's set—not ordered from a caterer, as before, but prepared in the house, made a change in the style of the table and in the whole ordering of the household, and, notwithstanding the refined simplicity that ruled in everything, raised the level of expenses materially, as also did the style of dress, which required much more attention than formerly.

Elsa worked with a joyful diligence that was increased by every success, and made ready for the Salon a large number of pastels and aquarelles, by which she hoped to secure general recognition and gain membership in the Society of the Champ de Mars. From time to time she saw the Baroness Agostini, by whose decided, but often melancholy, views of the world and of human nature the girl strengthened her own opinions; from her contact with painters she gained a clear idea of the aims of contemporary art, and the mental and

material elements of which the latest and most piquant novelties were composed ; and her intercourse with Brünne-Tillig, who was accustomed to come Sunday afternoons regularly, once in the week to come to supper and go to the theatre with them, and between whiles, usually, to come once more by accident, so to speak, was a constant stimulus to her emotional life.

Brünne-Tillig was undoubtedly attentive to her ; this, for the moment, was the expression which seemed suited to the case. It was attention, the most delicate and assiduous, chivalric in its politeness, responsive with eager deference to the girl's every gesture or look or smile, but, with all the warmth of his manner, and all the irrepressible ardour of his interest in Elsa, he still maintained an unalterable reserve. He did not declare himself ; he never sought to see her alone ; and if it happened by chance that he did, there was no change at all in his manner. To Elsa, this was in the main satisfactory. It allowed her to meet him freely. His presence no longer confused her, but merely stimulated her. In Berck, for a moment, there had been awakened in her heart toward him something so warm and strong, that it alarmed her tranquil soul. Through the vigorous effort of her will this had been subdued ; and it was now only a deep hidden emotion in her heart, which she loved to feel, singing to her amid her dreams. In her imagination, at the end of a long row of visions, she always saw herself at last as Brünne-Tillig's wife, but she also had a very clear feeling of the remoteness of this view. Meantime, she was by no means sorry to have it so remote. Hope and anticipation made for her a soft rapture, which her strong, equable nature, where tranquillity and patience ruled, enjoyed in a supreme degree. Meantime she had with the young man an active, friendly intercourse, to which exactly this unspoken something that both held in their hearts gave a deep, keen delight. What Elsa experienced was not the "restless happiness" of the poet ; the happiness she felt was restful ; it was love, but the love of a girl, healthful and inno-

cent through and through, the down of whose nature had been singed off by no premature flame.

Oscar alone did not show any increased happiness in existence at this time. He appeared, instead, somewhat burdened, depressed, often lost in thought that caused his brows to knit, his eyes to fix themselves on vacancy. He grew paler than ever, and as he was never noisy or showed the natural exuberance of boyish spirit, his mother at last grew anxious; and she questioned her husband whether something ought not to be done for the boy's health.

"He is at an age when this is not uncommon," the father said. "It's not remarkable that the boy should look rather pulled down." And Koppel repeated this explanation when Oscar's teacher complained that the young fellow was not working as well as usual. At the same time he admonished his son that school duties must not be neglected for all these literary efforts and long esthetic discussions with his poetizing comrades.

CHAPTER XIV.

OSCAR AND BLANCHE.

It was not, however, Oscar's work for the "young" periodicals, nor his intercourse with like-minded youths of his own age, which drew him away from his prescribed occupations. He had little Blanche in his head; he saw her warm-tinted little face, framed in its heavy black hair, in all his school-books; and it was of her that he thought, while his instructors expounded the beauty of Pythagorean utterances, or the economic ideas of Colbert.

He was with her as often as he could in any way arrange it. With excuses of every kind he rushed at every hour of the day to the Masmajours' apartment, and

when Elsa went thither he never failed to accompany her. But strongly as he felt impelled to be in the same room with Blanche, to breathe the same atmosphere with her, to speak to her and to have an answer from her lips and from her black eyes, to become absorbed in contemplation of her rather low, wilful forehead, her audacious little aquiline nose, her haughty little mouth with its bewitching, tempting lips, this gratification was by no means satisfactory to him; something more, something different, something more intimate he desired, but scarcely knew what. For seven years a pupil in one of the great city schools, and on friendly terms with a crowd of young fellows, many of them older than himself, he knew all that was to be learned in such companionship; he had read many books and seen many pictures that should have long, or forever, remained unknown to him. But for all that, not a thought of evil at this time stained the image of Blanche in his mind. His longing for her was ardent and excited, but vague and—at least, so far as he was conscious—innocent. He had consciously but the one wish—once, for one single time, to be alone with her for as long as he pleased without fear of being disturbed, that he might caress her, and whisper in her ear all that seethed in his brain, and devour her freely with his eyes, not as now, when he only secretly dared to look at her, and must, quickly and blushing, turn away his head that none might notice his stolen, ardent gaze. The intoxication of the half hour at the blonde Marie's wedding, when he had held her in his arms as they waltzed, had never gone off. His emotion of the moment had grown more intense, more acute in memory, and it awakened in him such a desire for his Blanche, for her hand, her arm, her hair, for all herself, that many a time, as he walked alone in the street, he could have cried out with this passionate longing.

But she was, and she remained, out of reach; Adèle kept sharpest watch, but without saying a word. Blanche could never once, when Oscar was leaving, slip out into the anteroom and exchange a rapid

caress, for when she rose, Adèle, unnoticed, did the same, and went with her sister, as if she had something to do outside. If she were sent to a customer, or to buy something at a shop, Adèle was invariably her companion, if the father could not go. Vainly did she object, vainly sulk, and say not a word to her sister on the way. Adèle remained amiable and decided, and carried her point. This exasperated Blanche to the degree that once, when Adèle had accompanied her to the Bon Marché, she broke out, with her naturally hot temper, and crimson with anger, screamed to her: "Are you not ashamed to drag after me like this?"

"No, my little Blanche, I am not ashamed," Adèle gently replied.

"What do you want of me?" Blanche hissed angrily.

"Nothing. I wish to keep you from doing anything foolish."

"What's that to you? You are not my mother."

"Would you rather I should speak to your mother about it?"

"What can you say? You can spy, and slander, and be a tell-tale, but there's nothing you can say."

Adèle grew paler than usual. Tears came into her eyes, and she said, in a low, trembling voice: "You are ungrateful, Blanche. You know that I love you."

Blanche's wrath vanished in an instant and she would have fallen upon her sister's neck; but they were in the street, and she must content herself with taking Adèle's arm, and pressing it hard. So the two sisters walked for awhile, silent. Then Blanche began again, no longer angry but complaining, reproachful: "You keep watch over me as if I were a criminal. Why do you grudge it to me to walk with my friend, and have a little talk sometimes?"

"When I am with you I do not grudge it. What I don't think right is that you hide away from me."

Blanche was silent and impressed. Indeed, why did Oscar so much wish to be with her alone? Why did she find this wish so natural and share it so eagerly? She could make no distinct answer to these questions.

Adèle was right; they ought not to hide from her. This was reason. But a half-hidden feeling whispered within her that it was something quite different to be with Oscar, hand in hand, eyes meeting eyes, unobserved and unrestrained.

Meetings, brief as a dream, upon the stairs at remote intervals, were all that circumstances permitted to Oscar and Blanche. Then the girl rushed into his arms, he kissed her on brow and cheek, eyes, neck, wherever his burning lips could touch; and then they fled like the wind when their strained ears heard a stair creak or the opening of a door. Blanche could no longer go to the post-office. Oscar formed the new plan of leaving his letters under the door-mat before the door of the Masmajours' apartment, where Blanche could find them without being observed. To answer them was only very rarely possible, except with a few words written in pencil, which she gave him when she could find the opportunity. She learned, while talking with Oscar in the presence of others, to make allusions which would show him that his letters had been received; and sometimes, even, she would answer things that he had said. She shortly attained great skill in this black art of allusive speech, which all might hear but only one could understand, and developed in the invention of significant expressions greater skill than an everyday author would bring to the getting up of a novel. Oscar vied with her in mental effort, but his, however, were directed toward another object. To have one little hour alone with Blanche! Upon this thought he dwelt constantly. He invented the most complicated schemes, in which might be traced the effect of the romances that he had read. But Blanche's half-concealed answer was always: "Impossible," or "Foolish." Oscar was much disheartened. He was accustomed to regard himself as a great poet. He had in his head a whole list of Romances and Dramas, full of matters of soul-value, with extraordinary situations and marvellous dénouements. And here his imagination showed itself to be so lame, so unfruitful, that he could devise no way for getting a tête-à-tête with a willing girl, who

lived in the same house with himself, and whom he saw daily for a longer or a shorter time.

Finally, it was Blanche who formed a plan. The Bon Marché announced, for a Monday in May, one of its usual "*Expositions*," that is to say, a sale of certain goods at reduced price, for a few days, until the stock was exhausted. Madame Masmajour never allowed these regularly recurring opportunities of making useful purchases to escape her. It was, at the moment, the very height of the season for work in millinery, and she had more orders than she could fill. It was therefore settled that Blanche should go to make the purchases, and that her father should accompany her. Blanche had her plan. Sunday evening, as the two families were taking tea together in the Koppels' apartment, and the elders listened amiably while the young people chattered together, she spoke purposely of the intended shopping expedition with her father the next morning, of the many purchases that she would have to make, of the crowd that, even at an early hour, would throng the shop, of the difficulty of keeping with one's companion in such a crowd; and she did not let the subject drop until she saw that Oscar had been attentive to what she said. As they were taking leave, she found an opportunity to slip a small, folded paper into Oscar's hand, on which she had written these words: "Square, opposite the rue Velpeau. From nine o'clock on. Impossible to fix the time."

In Oscar's brain it was as if a hundred violins and flutes were playing at once. For hours, that night, he lay awake, indescribably restless and yet blissful; and he had scarcely more than fallen asleep it seemed, when his father came to rouse him in the morning.

"Get up, you lazy boy!" Koppel said, "you are late for school now." When he appeared at the breakfast-table, his mother noticed the fatigue in his eyes. "Are you not well, Oscar?" she said. "Why, yes," he answered, and feigned surprise at the question. He made haste to get away, however, out of her sight, and

ran off as soon as possible, with his portfolio under his arm.

He did not, however, go to school. It was the first time in his life that he had played truant, and his school-boy conscience reproached him sternly. He banished the self-reproach, however, saying to himself: "What consequence is that little matter, when there is something so great, the greatest thing in the world, before me; I am going to meet the one I love!" He was a boy no longer, to fear a master's punishment; he was a man, in a man's proudest act, the carrying off of a beloved maiden! And when an official notice reported to his father the unexcused absence, he would find some way to explain the matter.

It was now eight o'clock, and it was not his intention to be at the designated place any earlier than nine. He found the passage of an hour slower than ever before in his life. He loitered around the Odéon, turned over books new and old in the stalls under the colonnade—an occupation, in which, on other occasions, the time was wont to fly as if it mocked him—but understood, however, not a word of what he read, since at every moment, his eyes sought his watch. When it was time he made his way across to the triangular square, upon which abuts one side of the Bon Marché buildings, and was there before nine o'clock. He sat down on a bench, in the shade of a tree, whence he could watch the rue Velpeau, and waited. His heart beat furiously, and his temples throbbed; when she came, what would he do? What should he suggest? Ideas of all kinds recurred to him—what his comrades had told him, what he had observed himself, with his own sharp eyes, as he had wandered through the streets of the Latin Quarter; in any case he would make the most that he could of the opportunity.

Long he sat there; or, at least, so it seemed to him. He thought his watch must have been stopped for hours when it indicated ten. Suddenly he started up, and rushed forward. Through the gate at the corner of the rue de Babylone, Blanche came hastily into the square, and cast shy, searching glances around her,

She saw Oscar at once, as he came rapidly towards her. He had the most urgent impulse to kiss her. Blanche forbade him with a decisive shake of the head, whispered hurriedly, though no one was near enough to hear her: "Come!" and started, almost running, for the further gate, upon the rue de Sèvres. Oscar kept close beside her, and asked, unconsciously also whispering: "How did you succeed in getting away?"

"Just come, and I will tell you afterwards," Blanche rejoined.

"Where are you going, my Blanche?" he asked.

"To get away from here," was the reply.

At the gate into the rue de Sèvres, he stood still and held her fast.

"What do you want?" she asked, anxiously, glancing about, as if still afraid that some one might be following.

"Let us get into a fiacre," he said, and made as if he would go toward the row of public vehicles that stand along the railing.

"No, no; let us take a walk," she replied, turning in the opposite direction. A glance over the row of fiacres had shown Oscar that there was not a single closed carriage among them, and an open one did not commend itself to him. He therefore obediently accompanied Blanche, who still ran rather than walked, until she turned into the rue du Vieux Colombier; here for the first time she slackened her pace, and drew a long breath: "Oh, I have been so anxious!" she sighed.

"Tell me all about it," he said, and he put his arm under hers, as is the present custom of the Parisian youth escorting the beloved one.

"Poor papa!" Blanche began, "I had to drag him about for an hour from one department to another before I could get away. At the ribbons there was enough of a crowd; there I left him planted and ran off. Now there's a search going on! If only he won't be too anxious!"

"But you are no child, darling, he will be reasonable enough to go quietly back to the house."

"This is very wrong that I am doing," she murmured.

"No, dearest Blanche, it is not wrong. I had to have the chance at last to tell you that I love you, that I adore you, that I am mad about you! I could endure it no longer to be silent."

"But you write the same things to me every day."

"That is not the same thing, at all. Does it make no difference to you whether you hear it, or only read it?"

"I like to read it and I like to hear it," she answered in a low voice, and a dreamy smile flitted over her blushing face. "But when you write it, I can read it ten times over."

"And you can hear it a hundred times! I shall never be tired of repeating it, beloved one."

They unconsciously clung together so fondly, their young faces, unpractised in the cool command of expressions, mirrored so tender an emotion that passers-by turned to look at them, some with a sympathetic smile, others with a frown of offended moralists. Much used as people are in this border street of the Latin land to the sight of wandering lovers, these two were noticeable on account of their youth, their good looks and their manifest ecstasy.

Blanche became conscious of this first; she drew away from Oscar in some confusion, and blushed deeper than before. Following a sudden impulse she went straight to the door of Saint-Sulpice, finding it just across the street from where they were. Oscar would have detained her, but she chose to go, and he had to follow her into the church. She dipped her slender fingers into the holy water, crossed herself and then him. She went into one of the side-chapels nearest to the door and knelt for a moment before an altar of the Virgin. Oscar regarded her with amazement.

"You are an extraordinary little creature!" he said, when she rose.

"It brings good luck," Blanche said, as they left the

church. "But you are a German heretic, and you don't know about it."

"To be a little praying sister seems to be a new rôle for you!"

"I recommended myself to the protection of the Blessed Virgin. So I hope I shall not have to repent for playing such a trick on poor papa! I have always had an idea that I was specially favoured by the Blessed Virgin. When I was a little child I thought of consecrating myself to her. And do you know, Oscar, if you should be false to me, I shall become a nun."

"I be false to you! No, my darling! That could never happen. You shall never go into a convent through fault of mine. But say, my little Blanche, must we be all the time on the street? The time is flying."

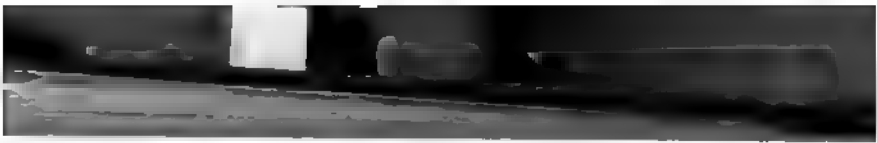
"You are right. Let us go into the Luxembourg for a little while."

This was not what he had in mind; but he dared not offer any other suggestion. As they were going through the rue de Tournon toward the palace, he said to her: "Think, my little pet, how much better off people are in the country. There, the young man goes with his sweetheart down shady lanes under tall trees, or they sit down by some brook, under overhanging bushes, or they can go into the fragrant hay-fields together, and be as happy as butterflies in the sunshine. But in the city, we are stared at all the time by a thousand malicious eyes."

"Then, let us go into the Luxembourg Garden," Blanche suggested. "There are not so many people there."

"Don't you think, my Blanche, that it must be much more beautiful, in memory, to blend the thought of one's love with the idea of blooming meadows and rosehedges, and bird song, and fragrance of flowers, than with an impression of narrow streets, and crowding workmen and the cry of the vegetable-sellers?"

"What consequence is all that? I see and I hear nothing of it. The only thing I notice is that we go



by nothing but shops with pictures of saints, and that at every window *le bon Dieu* and Blessed Virgin greet me. It seems to me as if Paris was all one great church. I never noticed it before! Will you believe it, my dear friend, I almost think I hear the organ and smell the incense."

They had now reached the grand entrance to the Luxembourg Garden. The flower-beds were in their most splendid May attire. The velvet turf shimmered in that green as of enamel or emerald to which in Paris only, outside of England, climate and care improve the grass. The chestnut trees had set up all their candelabra, and shone in the full splendour of their pink and white umbels. The white statues of French queens, individually stiff and monotonous, lost their ugliness, seen from a distance, and were like an assembly of amiable rococo ladies who—unapproachable, for all their affability—have come out among the common people into a park, and condescendingly look on at what the rest of the world is doing. Down the straight and almost deserted main avenue lay the yellow, morning sunlight. On the benches or in the iron chairs which edged it, children's nurses made a great display—in their bell-shaped cloaks and with the curious appendage of high-coloured ribbons floating down to their heels—with their nurslings in their laps or in front of them in baby-carriages, or else surrounded by children playing, driving hoop, jumping rope, or shovelling sand into little pails.

Oscar and Blanche wandered slowly past the noisy child-folk, and went to the left as far as the Debrosses fountain, which region of the Garden, at this time of day, was quite deserted. They sat down, sheltered by the shrubbery, on the edge of the long, angular basin. A faint perfume of lilacs and linden was in the air. Under the ice-smooth watery mirrors gleamed now and then, swimming near the surface, some little red and gold fish, then vanished, diving out of sight. Over the water played whirling caddis-flies, fine as if made of silk and silver and spun-glass. In the branches fluttered, hopped, and twittered small birds, for the

most part only sparrows in common yellow-brown dust-cloaks, but plump, from the abundant nourishment afforded by the city streets, and loud in their tipsy merriment.

"There can't be anything prettier in the country," whispered Blanche, and noticed with delight each one of the separate objects in which the spring manifested its luxuriant life.

Oscar took the girl's little hand in his own, stroked it and held it firmly. "Those two there are to be envied," he said, with a smothered voice, and indicated with a glance the principal ornamental structure of the parterre. In a sequestered grotto the marble figures of Acis and Galatea embraced each other, while bending over the edge of the vaulted roof, the uncouth Polyphemus, in rough stone, with one wicked eye in the middle of his forehead, watched and profaned the innocent happiness of the lovely pair.

"No; that horrid giant lies over their grotto, and watches them."

"But they observe it not, and go on thinking of each other only. Would you not gladly be the nymph, dear one?"

"What odd notions you have!" she said, and turned her head away from the divine nudity of the lovers.

A book-binder's apprentice with a green woven basket on his back came by the basin, saw the two sitting, hand in hand, and gazing ardently into each other's eyes, and screamed out with the satirical tone of the gamin: "*Oh! lovers!*" Blanche shrank back, and drew her hand away from Oscar's. He said to her: "Let us sit a little further back in the shadow."

"No matter!" she rejoined, "the stupid fellow has gone."

Both were silent a few minutes, then Blanche spoke: "Look," she said, "it seems as if the water were flowing out toward us."

And so, indeed, it appeared. The stone rim of the basin is of equal height at both ends. The eye accepts its line as horizontal; hence arises the illusion, as if the watery mirror, which is not paralled with the

rim but by degrees falls away from it, were not straight but sloping.

"Yes," he said, "the water runs outwards toward the enchanted grotto. Where two love each other truly, there wonders occur; for love is the first and highest law of nature and abrogates every other. Even that of gravitation."

"That is true," she answered quite seriously, "I feel as if I had no weight at all, as if I had wings."

"And truly you have, my sweet, white dove," Oscar said, ardently, "truly you have, like the other angels."

Blanche shook her little head, and over her face came a shadow of distress. "I am not an angel at all, but a bad little thing who is doing what she ought not to do."

A rapid glance satisfied Oscar that no one was in sight. He threw one arm around her shoulders, drew her quickly towards him and pressed an ardent kiss upon her lips. Surprised by the sudden movement, Blanche had not been able to resist in time, but she wrenched herself free as she felt his lips touch hers, and gasped: "Oscar! what are you doing?"

He looked at her as she had never seen him look before; his eyes glittered, they seemed to implore and threaten; in their depths seemed to lurk something incomprehensible, something like a cruel, inexorable force. An anxiety which she could not explain to herself seized upon her. She would have liked to rise and to run away, but some force seemed to detain her.

In Oscar's heart furious storms were raging. An overmastering impulse drew him towards the beautiful girl at his side. It seemed to him he must snatch her up in his arms, must carry her off, must whirl with her in some wild waltz, must do something desperate and violent; and there were people perpetually going by, men and women, who stared at them. A sort of rage grew in him, and also, a feeling of humiliation. If one of his comrades were to see him! If one of them should hear of this adventure! That he had sat harmlessly with the girl he loved in the Lux-

embourg Garden like a country recruit with a child's nurse, from time to time grinning idiotically, after embarrassed pauses saying stupid things, poking the toe of his boot into the sand like a fool! It appeared to him unspeakably ridiculous; his vanity suffered; and this base emotion gave him the audacity to speak out what he had had in his mind, of which he had till now been ashamed.

"Blanche, the time is passing," he murmured.

"Must we go?" she said, sadly.

"No," he rejoined, "but let us not sit here any longer. Blanche, darling, come, let us go somewhere else."

She looked up, astonished. "Where?" she said.

His voice had sounded harsh and unpleasant. An unwonted disagreeable look came over his face; he looked older and less refined than usual. "There is no sense in walking about the street, let us go indoors somewhere."

"I don't know what you mean," she whispered, distressed.

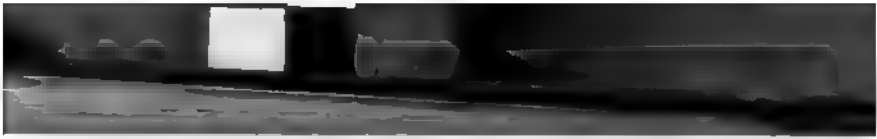
He had to say what was in his mind, and the coarseness of what he said was shocking to himself. "There are hotels enough ——"

She drew her chair away from his, became as white as a sheet and shut her eyes. Alarmed, he drew his chair near her and took her hand. It was cold and languid.

"Blanche, darling, little sweetheart, what is the matter?" he implored, penitently.

She opened her eyes which were full of tears, looked silently and long at him through the wet veil, and, while great drops rolled down her cheeks to which the colour slowly returned, she said, in a dull voice; "You have no respect for me." Then she rose and went towards the gate.

Oscar crept after her. His better nature awakened to a consciousness of his own baseness and was tortured by the stings of conscience. She walked silently away. For some time he dared not speak. If only she would express her displeasure! If only she would



reproach him in words! It would have been a relief to him to have been scolded roundly. But she never opened her lips, and that was dismal beyond endurance.

He must break the silence himself, then. "Blanche," he whispered, "what is the matter? Have I made you angry?"

She remained dumb.

"You misunderstood me; you are altogether mistaken. How could you think that I would suggest anything wrong to you? Do I not love you? Are you not truly my little fiancée? Will you not some day be mine? I only meant I longed to kiss you once with all my heart, and that was impossible out-of-doors, here. Sometime I must. Surely I have the right! Can you be angry with me for this?"

As he went on talking he grew more confident and positive. He believed himself what he was saying, and convinced himself that he had meant nothing wrong.

Blanche replied in a low voice but with decision:

"Let us say no more about it."

"Do you forgive me?" he begged, honestly distressed.

For an instant she laid her slender fingers in his grasp, permitted his eager pressure of them, then softly drew her hand away. But still not a word did she speak.

"Where are you going?" he asked, still contrite, but a little less unhappy.

"To the Bon Marché."

"Why?"

"Perhaps I may yet find papa there."

"What are you thinking about? He must have gone home long ago."

"I want to be able to say when they ask me, that I have just come from the Bon Marché. I don't like to tell any more lies than I must."

They were now at the corner of the rue de Sèvres and the rue de Babylone. "Good-bye, my friend," she said, and held out her hand.

"Shall I not wait for you, in case you should not find your father?"

"No."

"Then I will go home at once."

She turned away, and vanished into the crowd at the entrance of the great shop. Oscar watched the door for a while; then he also turned away, and went slowly, making a wide circuit, toward home, a drooping figure, with an aching void in his breast and a leaden cap on his head.

Masmajour had already been at home half an hour. When he came in alone, his wife and daughter, with one voice, cried: "Where is Blanche?"

He scratched his head and stammered: "It was impossible—in that crowd—it is like the storming of a fortress. And then, the girl is so quick in her motions. I am not slow myself—but Blanche—she is just like a squirrel—she skips through the thickest of the crowd. It is impossible to keep up with her. And I had been pushed and knocked about quite enough. Besides, she knows how to find her way home. We have no occasion to worry." And he laughed, in an embarrassed way.

His cheerfulness was not acceptable, however. "You know, my dear, that I do not like to have Blanche run about alone in Paris," Madame Masmajour said gently, but in a way that caused her husband to cast down his eyes in much confusion. And even the usually amiable Adèle said, reproachfully: "When you are sent out with Blanche, it is to have you stay with her."

At last, the door-bell rang. Adèle ran to open the door. Her glance rested on the returned girl with inquiry and reproach; but Blanche brushed past her into the room, bent her forehead to be kissed by her mother and father, and laid aside her hat and wrap, without, as usual, going into the bedroom which the sisters shared. It was evident that she avoided being alone with Adèle.

"Well, you did not treat me very kindly," Masmajour consoled himself by remarking.

"It was not my business to keep watch of you,

papa," the girl retorted. Her father endured the remark patiently, and began to read his paper, while Blanche narrated to her mother the purchases she had made.

At the noonday meal she was so absorbed in thought that she almost forgot to eat, and did not notice, when any one spoke to her. Adèle observed the spot of colour that burned in her sister's cheeks, the contracted brow, the absent-minded look, the dark shade under the eyes, and an anxiety overflowed her heart which made her also silent. After the meal was over, Blanche could do no otherwise than go to wash her hands in the bedroom; this was the opportunity Adèle awaited, and she followed her sister instantly.

"You have been with him," she said.

"And what if I have?" Blanche retorted defiantly, and threw back her head.

"Do you mean to destroy yourself?"

"How?"

"Wretched girl! What does this lead to?"

"What does it generally lead to when two people love each other? I have never expected to go into a convent! You would not like it yourself. I am Oscar's fiancée, and a fiancée is married some day."

Adèle clasped her hands: "That is clear madness, Blanche. How can you talk such nonsense, when generally you are so sensible? You are older than this boy."

"We are of the same age," Blanche rejoined, cap-tiously.

"No, he is two months younger than you."

"Well, if you are going to count the days and hours—but that is absurd."

"Man and wife of the same age means that the wife is ten years older."

"That is just talk. I don't agree in it at all. Oscar is young, and so am I; and it is much more natural than to fall in love with a man as old as papa."

This was a home thrust. "You are angry, Blanche," Adèle said; "you ought not to be. I have not de-served it. Do you suppose I grudge you any happi-

ness? But you are a thoughtless child, and I must take care of you."

"Don't worry. I know how to take care of myself." Her voice had a tone of decision. Blanche remembered what had occurred within the last hour, and she felt that she had a right to answer so confidently.

Adèle shook her head; she sat down on her bed, drew Blanche to her side, with one arm around her waist, and said tenderly: "Be sensible, my poor Blanche. Oscar will never marry you."

Blanche would have gotten away, but Adèle held her fast. "He will never marry you, and, at the bottom of your heart, you know this, yourself. He is a child, just as you are. It may be he promises all sorts of things. But promises of children are not valid. He has not even any occupation in view."

"Oh yes, he has," interrupted Blanche, "he is a poet."

"That does not bring in any money."

"You think so? But Monsieur Dumas is a millionaire."

"We will wait till Oscar becomes Monsieur Dumas."

"Oh, I don't mind that. I am willing to wait, as long as we must."

"Meantime, he will forget you."

"How will he forget me, when we are together every day?"

"You have an answer for everything one says. But it is all nonsense; and you must get it out of your head."

"Out of my heart, you mean. We love each other."

"At your age, one thinks so; but later, you will see that it is all a mistake."

"You seem to speak from experience: but don't be so wise."

There appeared to be no way to influence Blanche. In her anxiety, Adèle fell upon more awkward expedients. "And then, Oscar is a Protestant," she said.

At this, Blanche smiled. She was conscious that

Adèle was giving up the struggle, and seeking to cover her retreat with a few, scattering, ill-aimed shots.

"Men, all of them, are unbelievers," she said, "whether they call themselves Catholics or Protestants, I am willing to pray enough for both."

"Oscar is a German. He will go back to his Prussia, by and by."

Blanche's face grew hard again and she answered, with ill-suppressed violence: "Now, you are not talking honestly. Enough. Let us go out. Mamma will not know why we keep talking so long."

She went into the work-room, and Adèle could not help following. The elder sister was extremely disturbed, and full of anxious thoughts. She wished to do her duty, but she was not quite sure what her duty was. Should she confide the secret to her mother? That appeared at first the right thing to do, but it involved a kind of treachery toward Blanche, which was repugnant to her. Perhaps, to speak with Elsa, that she might deal with Oscar and lecture him, while she herself looked after Blanche? This idea met her approval. Thus she would make supervision easier, and share the responsibility. If however, Elsa in turn should confide the secret to her parents, the youth would be sharply brought to book, and there would be a general unpleasantness, from which Adèle shrank. The best way out of the difficulty, that which commended itself most to her was that a plan should be carried out which, for a few weeks past, had been much talked over in the Masmajour family.

Their situation had happily grown better of late. The clientèle of Madame Masmajour increased from day to day. She now could scarcely fulfil all the orders she received. In the household she could no longer do without assistance. A woman came mornings, and remained, with the exception of three hours of the afternoon, till after dinner. It was more expensive than to keep a servant, but there was no place for one in the four rooms; and an attic-room belongs only with larger apartments. Everything in-



licated a broadening out of their way of living. A larger work-room was needed to accommodate apprentices and employées. They could no longer do without a salon; it was not suitable to receive customers in the dark living-room, and, especially, not if they were to be made to pay higher prices than heretofore.

Through the Baroness Agostini, Madame Masmajour had gained customers from the high finance; and through Madame Zagal, ladies of the South American colony; a singer, also introduced by the baroness, brought them theatrical stars. Many of her creations for the autumnal races, for Varnishing Day, and, most of all, for the Grand Prix, excited attention and were copied by unscrupulous "great houses." To gain established position, she must now come forward in good shape, and open an elegant salon in a fashionable part of the town. Mother and daughters went over the details very carefully and at great length. Should it be a shop with show-windows or a suite of rooms in an entresol? Their taste favoured the latter; it was less in the street; it gave the proprietress more the effect of being a lady. Should there be a sign? No. On the house-door, a proudly modest plate, with the one word: *Modes*. And the paper used by the establishment should have only Madame Masmajour's given name, Madame Claire, that the honoured name of the family should not be lowered to the purposes of business.

But the main point to be considered was, should there be a new house founded, or should an already established business be bought out? Masmajour himself, whose advice was not much asked for, but who for kindness' sake was not excluded from the family councils, believed the latter to be the safer plan. Madame Masmajour had confidence and courage enough to strike out boldly for herself. It was plainly less expensive to do this, and she had no doubt of rapidly bringing up a new enterprise to the desired height. Estimates, many times verified, and corrected in accordance with facts, showed that, for the venture

—with the most frugal and economical outfit that was consistant with the desired aims—about 20,000 francs were requisite. In the short two years since the family had come to Paris, Madame Masmajour had been able to lay up between 4 and 5,000 francs,—nearly all of this indeed, within the last six months. The commission merchant for whom she had worked at first, and to whom she now communicated her plan, at once declared his willingness to furnish 6,000 francs at five per cent interest, and six per cent share in the profits. He would, if desired, furnish the 10,000 francs in addition, but in that case, he would require half of the net profits, a silent partnership, and the sole use of the firm-name, if Madame Masmajour should at any time wish to withdraw. These conditions seemed to her extortionate and she refused them. But how obtain the required 10,000 francs? Masmajour silently proposed to himself to procure them, and thought he could do it very easily. He wrote to the cousin in Nîmes, who had, in the earlier time, recommended to him the Panama investment. He reminded the cousin of this, and made known to him that he had now an opportunity, at least in some degree, to repair the wrong that he had done. The cousin, displeased at this not very diplomatic opening of the subject, left the letter unanswered. After waiting a week, Masmajour wrote again. Then the cousin replied, somewhat curtly, that he had duly received the letter, but judged that no reply was needed. After this failure, Masmajour turned to his wife's uncle, the president of the insurance company in which he himself had formerly been employed. This gentleman replied politely that he regretted not to have, at the moment, any available funds. It might, however, awaken doubt as to the truth of this assertion that the writer went on to say that he esteemed it his duty as a kinsman, to warn his nephew against ventures made with borrowed money, since their failure was generally judged by the world, and in some cases, by courts of justice, with much more severity than failures where one's own money had been employed. Much crest-

fallen, Masmajour communicated to his wife the ill-success of his attempts. She coloured violently, thanked him for his efforts, and then required him to promise, and give his hand upon it, that he would never again in any case, apply for assistance to his family or to hers.

Then Masmajour made himself humble, being determined to show that he could carry out what he had begun, and went on a Sunday to tell the story to Koppel, desiring his advice, with the concealed hope that he might be recommended by Koppel to some rich man of his acquaintance. Koppel, who was much attached to the Masmajours, and had regarded their increased success with great interest, listened willingly and asked Masmajour if he were at liberty to speak of it to Madame Masmajour. This was not exactly agreeable to the visitor, but he saw no way to refuse. Accordingly, Koppel had a very cordial talk with Madame Masmajour as to all the facts in the case, the estimates of expense, the hopes and wishes of the mother and daughters. His first impulse was to offer her at once the 10,000 francs she required. But to this impulse he did not yield. He was having some trouble at the moment, himself. The ruble-Russians were falling slowly but steadily. They now stood at 76. He had been obliged to pay something like 60,000 francs. The pleasant custom of bringing home at every semi-monthly settlement a little package of Almadens had to receive a disagreeable interruption. On the contrary, he had been obliged to give up seventy-five of these certificates to the *coulissier* to make good the decline in the stock. He therefore felt it wiser not to narrow his resources at the moment, but to wait till the Russians should go up again, before offering his help to a neighbour. That this would very soon occur, he had no doubt.

Such was the situation in the month of May. Everything was as yet uncertain, and Madame Masmajour could not tell whether she should be able to carry out her plan.

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT TO DO WITH OSCAR ?

IN May, Elsa's birthday came again, and was celebrated, as the preceding year, by a supper-party. But this time the table was adorned with silver not hired for the occasion but purchased ; and the supper itself was not brought in from a caterer's, but was prepared in the house under the supervision of a cook engaged for the occasion. Among the guests Henneberg was not included, as he had neglected them continuously through the whole winter, and Frau Käthe objected to his being invited. But his absence left no gap at the family table where were crowded fourteen persons : besides the Masmajours there were Brünne-Tillig, Pierre, another painter, and two young comrades of Oscar.

Elsa had had great success with her pictures at the Salon. In all the accounts of the exhibition, she was named ; the *Vigie de la Presse* had been able to send her over fifty clippings ; in a "young" periodical had appeared a wreath of sonnets, by a friend of Oscar, it is true, each poem having for its subjects one of the pictures ; and—which showed that the impression made was real—a dealer had bought all the eight aquarelles and five pastels, at a price which at one stroke made Elsa a rich girl, the possessor of over 10,000 francs. She had not as yet received the money ; she was to have it at the close of the exhibition, on delivery of the pictures ; but the sale was made definitive on stamped paper, and Frau Käthe called her daughter by no other name than "little Croesa," notwithstanding Koppel's solemn protest against this barbarism. Pierre offered a toast at the supper : "To the fame of the birthday-child !" Whereat Brünne-Tillig offered another to Elsa's happiness, with the hope that it would not consist in fame

only! At this toast the Masmajours exchanged glances; they expected the next thing would be an announcement of the betrothal; and as this did not occur, they wondered more than ever at the anomalous ways of the Germans.

After supper was over, Oscar and Blanche, in the salon while coffee was served, made ingenious endeavours to get off into a corner by themselves; but Adèle was always a third, and the two could only talk of indifferent matters, at least, with their lips. Their eyes, however, said things much more interesting, whenever there was any chance of escaping observation.

It was near midnight before the guests took their leave. Koppel saw that his family were very tired; he, therefore, did not begin on any exciting and extensive topic, but contented himself with saying:

"It would be right pleasant if we had more room. Decidedly we have outgrown this box." The following day, however, at dinner he was unusually taciturn and thoughtful, and when dessert was on the table, he began in a tone whose seriousness at once attracted the notice of every one: "Now, my dears, I think the time has come to make a change in our way of living. You, Elsa, are on the way to make a great name for yourself; you can earn as much as you please; you will, in a few days, be elected a member of the Champ de Mars Association; you cannot remain any longer in your little courtyard room, you must now have an atelier that is worthy of you."

"Yes, papa; you dear, kind papa!" cried Elsa, in great delight, and clapped her hands.

"And this apartment is really too small for ourselves. I have decided to give notice of leaving in the autumn."

"*Ach Gott!* Hugo," interrupted Frau Käthe, anxiously, "have you forgotten the trouble we had with our furniture?"

"We have had thirteen years' time to recover from that effort! And since the furniture makes us so much trouble, we will now part with it. It certainly has earned its discharge."

"You talk in a very grand way."

"Don't be childish, my dear Käthe; do you not see yourself that it is absurd to be a slave all one's life to this cumbersome lumber?"

Frau Käthe was always reluctant to differ, and, therefore, she remained silent. Koppel went on: "And you, my boy, have come to a point where we must begin to look out seriously as to your future."

Oscar listened intently.

"In a few weeks you will have completed your eighteenth year; it is time that you should qualify to volunteer, and prepare, not only for your year's military service, but also for your future life. I have decided to send you home to Germany. It is true that you will have to do without your vacation this summer, since the school year here ends in July, and begins, at home, in August. But you have not been so very industrious these last few months that you have any great need of recreation. I do not say this to reproach you, but only as stating a fact."

Oscar had grown very red. He bent his head and played nervously with the orange-peel on his plate. His mother spoke for him. "This is very sudden, dear Hugo," she said. "What is your plan about it? When is Oscar to go? It is really hard to send the poor fellow away among strangers."

"Among strangers? You mean to say I am sending him home. My plan is this: we will take Oscar to the Gymnasium at Freienwald; I hope he can enter the Upper First; we will place him as a boarder in the house of my old colleague Fabrizius, who is one of the professors. We will all remain there with him two months. That shall be our vacation trip this summer. And in this way, Elsa, too, will have an opportunity to see something of the Fatherland."

"And then?" Oscar said, looking up. The colour had gone from his face, and he was now paler than usual.

"Then? If you do well, as I expect you will, in a year you can pass the examination, and enter the University, Strassbourg, perhaps, or else Bonn, so that

you may not be very far away from us. Then you can take your year's military service. And before that, you will have been able to decide upon your profession."

"I have already decided upon my profession," Oscar said resolutely. "I shall be an author."

"I have no objection, my boy," replied Koppel kindly. "It will only be of service to you, for this calling, that for six or seven semesters you follow courses of Language, Literature, and Philosophy, in one of our Universities. You need to become thoroughly acquainted with German thought, and to acquire greater facility in the use of the language. That is, of course, of the very highest importance for an author."

"For a German author. But I am a French author, and shall remain so," Oscar said.

A painful silence ensued. Koppel looked at his son in amazement; his mother looked at him in distress. Oscar, however, after a brief inward struggle, went on in a tone of decision: "Pardon me, father, but I think your plan is not a good one. At least, not for me. If instead of graduating here in Paris and going on as the others do, I go away into Germany, I take my year's service there, and I attain a doctor's degree, what shall I do then? I cannot remain there."

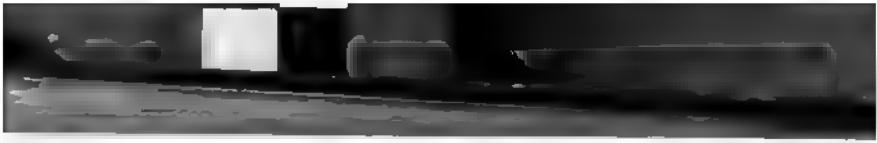
"But why not?" Koppel inquired.

"I have no acquaintances there. I should be, as a matter of fact, a foreigner in Germany. And I cannot return into France, for I shall then have become a German soldier, a man of another country, an enemy."

"Are you not that at present?"

"No, father. A long time ago I used to be teased a little by the other boys because it was impressed upon them that I was born in Berlin. But it is so long ago that you have to remind me or I should forget it altogether. For years, it has never occurred to any one to regard me as a foreigner. I have taken root here. It would be cruel in you to uproot me."

Koppel sought to give a sportive tone to the conversation. "A man must have a country or he hangs



suspended in the air and belongs nowhere. Think what advantages you would lose in your future career of authorship. Where could posterity erect your statue if you renounce your fatherland?"

"I gain a new country here," Oscar replied, without a smile; "I don't know whether Chamisso has a monument in Berlin, but he might have one there."

"That is not the same thing. We have no hatred towards the French, but the French hate us. Here, you will forever remain a Prussian, and this will be always thrown up against you. When you become in any way conspicuous, every man who strives to come to the front has enemies, and you need not expect that yours will leave unemployed so convenient and sure a weapon as your Prussian birth."

At last, Oscar smiled. "In ten years," he said, "this weapon will be no longer formidable. I think, papa, you do not very well understand the generation that is coming up."

"It may be so," Koppel rejoined, somewhat impatiently. "I will take your word for it, that the coming generation will be composed of dispassionate creatures, but as a Frenchman, you will always be a second-class citizen who must deny himself every lofty ambition, for instance, any political aspirations."

"Perhaps," replied Oscar, sullenly, "but is it my fault? I did not ask to be brought up in France. You were not able to think about my future in deciding to come to Paris. The situation in which you at that time were, did not allow you to consider what my situation in the future might be. I have to accept a fate for which I was not responsible; but at least, I must be allowed to adjust myself to it without interference."

Koppel felt the sting in his son's extraordinary words. "Your generation, my son," he said, bitterly, "may have great merits, but filial respect and gratitude are not among the number."

"Father ——" Oscar began, but Koppel interrupted him.

"Permit me to continue," he said, "I have worked

for you and still work; I came to Paris that you might have bread to eat; and in sending you now to Germany, I make a heavy sacrifice in order that my fate may be without disastrous influence upon yours."

Oscar hung his head. Frau Käthe, who had listened with painful excitement, thought it time to strike in.

"But, Oscar," she said, "is there nothing that draws you towards Germany? Have you no affection for the fatherland of your parents?"

"Mamma dear," Oscar rejoined, "the principal thing that I know about Germany is, that it did not allow my father to live in accordance with his convictions."

"Has not France often enough sent her best men into exile?" retorted Koppel. "That never hindered them from remaining her faithful sons."

"I am not aware," Oscar answered dryly, "that the French refugees in Berlin have been extraordinarily devoted to their native land."

A sultry pause followed, and then Oscar spoke again. "What can I do, dear mamma?" he said; "one cannot make himself a new soul. Mine has been formed by French schools, French books, and French associates. Patriotism in the final analysis is only a community of feelings. I share, necessarily, in those of my friends."

"And so, if there were a war, you would be willing to fire upon your German cousins?" Frau Käthe asked.

"Mankind will not long continue to be so foolish as to carry on war. But if such a crime should ever be again committed, certainly neither should I be willing to fire upon my schoolmates. My German cousins are strangers to me. My French friends are part of my life."

"Your whole argument," Koppel declared, "presupposes that, after your studies in Germany, you will return to Paris. It falls to pieces, if you remain in Germany. There, your youth spent in Paris will have done you no harm, but on the contrary, will be an ad-

vantage to you. Your knowledge of French will give you a specialty admitting of the most useful practical applications."

"I am to remain in Germany, while you all continue to live in France?"

"I have not said that," Koppel replied, with emphasis.

"I don't see why you make so much objection," Elsa remarked, for the first time putting in a word. "I am very fond of Paris; I have schoolmates and friends here; but to me the idea of living in Germany is not disagreeable."

"That is easily accounted for," Oscar rejoined quickly. When he observed that Elsa blushed very red, he added: "The brush is used in the same way everywhere. Colours speak neither French nor German."

"So?" Elsa rejoined; "but foreign painters come here that their palettes may assimilate the French language."

"In short," Oscar said defiantly, "your case and mine are not the same. Of one thing, I am certain: if the natural course of my development is broken up, I shall suffer very serious injury. And for what cause must I endure this harm? On account of an antiquated sentimentalism, at which a man of enlightened mind must smile."

"What is it that you call an antiquated sentimentalism?" Koppel asked sharply.

"The regulation flag-and-uniform enthusiasm for a land in which I happen to have been born. I do not admit that this accident gives a country any rights over me. I am first and chiefly, a personality; and am free to order my life in accordance with my own feelings, not in accordance with geographical and ethnographical prejudices."

"That is enough," Koppel said decisively. "Keep your exceedingly 'young' philosophy to yourself for the present and now, go to school. It is time."

Oscar rose, bowed in silence, and left the room. His grandmother did the same, with her afternoon

nap in view. She had followed the conversation with extreme interest, but as her custom was, in entire silence. When, however, she extended her hand to her son and wished him, "*Mahlzeit!*" she could not resist adding a word: "I have been hoping we should go back to Germany. But now I suppose there is no chance of it."

"Would you really like to go back?" Koppel asked.

"It is no use to wish for what can't be," the old lady answered and, shaking her head, she tripped away.

Koppel and his wife went into the adjacent room, while Elsa remained to assist the surly maid in clearing the table.

"I never suspected this in Oscar," Frau Käthe said, interrupting her husband's profound reverie.

"Children are always a surprise," Koppel replied, sententiously.

"How humiliating!" Frau Käthe went on; "it is just your own flesh and blood; you yourself have formed and trained the young soul; and, of a sudden, a stranger speaks to you, whom you don't know, whom you don't understand, who doesn't love what you love,—who doesn't wish what you wish! Has a mother really so little influence, then, over her child?"

"A mother cannot keep her child forever under her wing. School and street, human and material environment, work irresistibly; children take their views and feelings from the air they breathe, and this air cannot always be that of the home."

"But we have been guilty of a very grave sin of omission, in not associating more with our own people. If we had had more German society——"

"It would have made no difference," Koppel rejoined: "I see it in the families of my pupils. They are all rich or well-to-do people; they evidently hold to their nationality as Germans, for they spend liberally to give their sons a German education in Paris; they frequently go home for a visit; they keep up

social relations among themselves ; and yet, the next generation are Germans no longer. You have no idea of the trouble we take in the school that the boys shall talk German with each other. The French spirit, French ways, exercise over young minds an influence which it is vain to oppose. There is but one thing to do. They must be withdrawn from it."

Koppel was silent for a little while. Then he went on: "It is peculiar. Although I have made a campaign I never have been a raging patriot, and I am conscious of having felt an inclination towards cosmopolitanism—much as this trait was decried among us after 1870. But now, when I have to meet the question practically, I find myself shocked that my only son should be a Frenchman, perhaps even a despiser of my native land. Then, for the first time, one suspects how truly he is a German, in every bone of his body." Frau Käthe seized his hand, and pressed it gratefully.

"But in one respect, the boy was right. I must not through an unreasonable decision throw difficulties in his way ; it would bring him into a false position later if he had his military service in Germany and completed his studies there, and then came here to live and work. I think there is still time to make a good German of him if we take him home. But he will have to stay in Germany."

"Separated from us?" Frau Käthe lamented.

"No. United to us. I have not been, until now, clear as to what it would be best for us to do. Now, I see my way. We must all return home."

"That would be good," murmured Frau Käthe. "But—give up an established position, and go upon an uncertainty——"

"There is no uncertainty, dear Käthe," Koppel said. "We have enough to live on, and run no risk."

She looked at him, with unmistakable anxiety. He met her penetrating gaze with a smile. Upon this, she abandoned all reserve and exclaimed: "Hugo, you are keeping a secret from me, or else you are telling me what is not true. For that you are deceived

yourself, I cannot believe. For more than a year, your conduct has been a mystery to me. Within the past year you have given us over two thousand francs for our toilettes."

"If she did but know that it is over four thousand francs!" Koppel thought; but he said nothing and only smiled.

"You have increased my household allowance by a hundred francs a month, and all the silver for the table that you have bought; and the trip to Berck, and the little parties and excursions!—where does all this come from? Your six thousand francs from Wolzen could not pay for it; your private pupils you gave up of your own accord. When I am anxious, you always answer me: 'We have it; we can do it.' But I know what we have. Our 60,000 marks do not bring us in quite 2200 francs a year. If you have not made a fortune in some way——"

"Don't you think that I have, perhaps, without your knowledge?"

"I do not; and for that reason, it is all a riddle to me."

Koppel rose from his seat and paced the room, his eyes fixed on the floor, with one hand stroking his beard; then he stopped before Frau Käthe, caressed her cheek with his hand and said:

"You must know that we are—I will not say, rich, but well off. I have been occupied with a profitable business, and now we can see the results."

The effect of his words was not at all what he expected. Frau Käthe shrank back; she grasped his hand with both of hers and held it fast and cried in a sort of terror: "What does that mean—a profitable business?—what kind of a business?"

"I have bought stocks and have gained on them."

"You mean you have gambled at the Bourse?"

"That is, perhaps, not just the right way to express it. But if you choose, you may call it so."

Frau Käthe released his hand and let her own hands fall.

"And you did not tell me anything about it."

"So that I should not worry you. Now, you know the results and I think you may be contented."

She shook her head slowly. "And what if you had lost?" she said.

"That was impossible, my dear Käthe."

"I can't but think it is a game at which one can lose as well as win," she said.

"It is not at all a game but a speculation; a safe speculation."

"No, Hugo, I cannot be glad of your winnings. It hurts me very much that you have been able for months to keep a secret from me. I am no longer your confidant, no longer a part of your life, as you have often told me that I was?"

"You are all that, sweetheart. But do you not think that there might be anxiety or suspense that a man should bear alone?"

"No, Hugo, I do not. Heretofore, I have shared in everything, and have never made an hour of your life harder, through being timid or despondent—at least, I hope so; and you have always said so; and you have praised me—more than I have deserved. And very often there have been harder things to bear than to know about a speculation. Hugo, you have grieved me extremely. How can I ever trust you, blindly and fully, as I used to do, when I can never forget that for months you have been keeping an important secret from me?"

The more he felt that she was right, the more resentful he became. "I confess," he said, "that I expected something different from you, by way of thanks. For whom have I done this but for you and for the children? Now we have been successful, we are independent, henceforth, and instead of being glad, you sulk."

"To gain independence and to lose you, is a poor exchange."

"To lose me?"

She bent her head sadly.

"Formerly you could not have had anything in your mind like this and concealed it from me. I don't

know what I have done that you should treat me like a stranger." Her lips quivered and her eyes grew wet.

Koppel bent down to her; he kissed her on both eyes, and he said tenderly: "Be good, sweetheart! It may be true that I have done wrong, but I meant well. For the sake of the good intention, you must forgive me."

Both were silent. Frau Käthe dried her eyes, then said in a voice that was still tearful:

"And how much have you made?"

"So far, a quarter of a million," he replied cheerfully.

"So far?" she asked, with renewed anxiety. "Are you speculating still?"

"In all,—I should have said," he rejoined quickly, ashamed that he had betrayed himself.

Frau Käthe believed him. "That is a great deal of money," she said; "but I am not sure that there is a blessing with it."

"That is a superstitious thought, my good Käthe," said Koppel. "The original source of money does not give its blessing but the way it is employed, and this depends upon what we are. You are unconsciously influenced by a recollection of the Nibelungen treasure."

"This story of treasure to which is attached a curse has always seemed to me one the most significant of our German legends. Money gained at the Bourse—I do not know—"

"Do not be childish. And your own legacy? Did you feel so about that?"

"Oh, Hugo! That came to me from my own kindred. My own family gained that by honest work."

"And suppose with one of your bonds of the City of Paris or of the *Crédit foncier*, you had won the great prize?"

"That would not have been the same thing. I cannot explain why, but I feel it very clearly."

"Then be consistent, so far as a woman can be," he said, now becoming impatient. "Shall I return this

money that I have gained, or would you prefer to have me give it away?"

"No. But promise me one thing, Hugo. You will never do it again?"

"What?"

"Speculate."

His face darkened and he became silent.

"Unless you promise I shall never have an hour's peace again."

She looked at him so anxiously and imploringly that he, almost against his will, replied:

"I promise." As he made the promise he had in his mind the reservation: "I mean I will undertake no new affair," and he persuaded himself that his words, with this meaning put upon them, were not untrue.

She leaned her head against his breast gratefully; he bent over her and pressed a kiss upon her brown hair. The situation tranquillized him. He appeared to himself as an extremely kind, extremely clever, extremely strong person, who well deserved his family's love, having done great things for them, and intending to do more.

An idea flashed into his mind. "I have still twenty minutes," he said, "and if I should be a little late it is no great matter. Come, I will show you how our possessions look. It will be an amusement to you once to touch them with your own hands."

It was rather a childish thing, but it did not displease her. She was quickly ready, and the two drove to the *Crédit Lyonnais*. Koppel conducted his wife down into the subterranean treasure-house, opened his box, took out the leathern portfolio, and proud and pleased exhibited to her its contents.

"See," he said, "those are your securities, and this is what has come of them. Your bonds have got a fine family. Don't you think so, sweetheart? And here lie eleven bank-notes, for which, at this moment, I have no use." If only she had been there eight weeks earlier, he could have showed her 300 *Almadens*. But he had been obliged to part with 75 of these.

But what remained was enough to fill out the portfolio very handsomely.

Frau Käthe regarded the strong sheets of paper printed in colours and adorned with many important stamps, and a certain timidity came over her. This was the way Mammon looked, then! If you had a bundle of these under your arm you were well off and independent; if you did not possess them, you were poor and full of cares. In the *fiacre*, on the way home, she made many inquiries about details, which he answered very scantily and superficially. It was more interesting to him to talk about what they would now do. They would return to Germany. But this could not be done for a year yet, the contract with Wolzen requiring a full twelvemonth's notice, from July to July; and for that time it was not worth while to change their residence. Of course, Elsa could not remain for a whole year without an atelier. This was a difficulty, but it could be remedied. An atelier could be rented for a year at a fair price, in some one of the many new buildings which were adjacent to the Luxembourg Garden. Elsa, then, would pass the whole day there, only returning home for meals and at night. She might have the maid with her, who was trustworthy though sullen, and another servant could be employed for the housework.

"Do you think that Elsa would have as good an opening in Germany as in Paris?" Frau Käthe asked, and Koppel replied that he was sure she would.

"The foundation is laid," he said; "she is now known in Paris. Every year we should come back here with her for a few weeks for the Salon, and she would keep herself in the public view in Paris. We should have to allow for that, in any case, for Elsa will undoubtedly marry into Germany."

"Brünne-Tillig still says not a word."

"Oh, well! His conduct would be incredible if he was not in earnest. You will see; he will declare himself at the moment when our new plans are made known."

"I wish we had come to it now. But tell me,

Hugo, when we are again in Germany, and we have an officer for son-in-law, you will have nothing more to do with the Socialists?"

"Be easy, sweetheart. I no longer expect to change the world. I have discovered that. My gratifications in the future I expect from intellectual labour and intellectual pleasures; and the two are one."

"And from the happiness of our children?"

"Certainly. And so, for our small share, we have solved the social question. This may be a somewhat selfish idea, but one gets modest, as he grows older."

"*Ach!* Hugo, what windows you open to me in the future! If only it is not all a dream!"

"Were you dreaming, down there in the safety-vault?"

"Yes, and no. I have not quite worked it out yet in my own mind. And about Oscar's journey, it will all go well, because we are going too?"

"Oh no, Käthe; Oscar cannot lose this year; we will take him to Freienwald as I had planned; and the year after, we will come, and have him at home with us again."

As soon as Frau Käthe reached the house, she hastened to Elsa, and made known to her what a change awaited them. The girl was extremely surprised and confused. She could not tell whether she were glad or sorry. To give up Paris was hard. She had grown into the life of the city with all her daily habits, and all her thoughts had as their concrete elementary principle, pictures out of the Parisian circle of ideas. "A river" took in her mind the form of the Seine, at Pont-Neuf; the notion "theatre" clothed itself in the aspect of the grand front of the Paris Opera-house, and the Dancing Groups of Carpeaux; when she thought of "success," it meant a crowd before her pictures in the Champ de Mars Salon; the idea of "amusement" was made up of shadowy memories of Grignols in the Champs-Élysées, picnics in the Bois, fire-works on the Pont de l'Alma, and visits to the fair at Neuilly. On the other hand, Germany attracted her, as something remote, lofty, like a sort of "Other World," of

which one thought with longing, yet with a slight fear. In the country, where she herself, her mother, and also her grandmother, had spent their early years, it appeared to her that an everyday existence was not possible. Everything there must be extremely sacred and devotional; everybody must wear Sunday clothes, they must keep still, and speak low, as in a church. It was a place to pray in, to be married in, a place to bury one's dear dead relations in, a land for visits and strong emotions, but not for careless residence. So her feelings fluctuated between the present and the suddenly revealed future, between the known and the anticipated, in alternate ebb and flow, hither and thither, leaving her unsettled and unhappy. But with all the liveliness of imagination which was with her a family trait, she was also, individually, endowed with a feeling for the actual, which quickly tranquillized her. "At any rate," she said to herself, "nothing will be changed for a year, and so I have no need of anxiety at present about what may happen then."

Also with her mother-in-law Frau Käthe talked over the new plans. The old lady only inquired: "When will this be?" And, being told: "Next year," she observed; "Who knows whether I shall be alive?" And when Frau Käthe said she would in all probability be spared to them a good many years yet, and enjoy her native country for a long time, she, at first, became thoughtful, and then said: "It would be certainly very pleasant. Not on account of life, but on account of death. If I had died in Paris, I should not have been at all willing that you should send me to Germany. That would cost a fortune, and I should not like to be more of an expense to you dead than living. But if it happens at home, then you can bury me beside my dear husband and so I shall be where I belong."

After supper Koppel called Oscar into his own room, and said to him with involuntary seriousness: "I have been thinking over your position, and I see that you are right. It is important for your future success that you should be at home somewhere. We

will all return to Germany and live there permanently."

Oscar changed colour, and his eyes opened wide. He made no reply, however, and after a few minutes, Koppel asked: "Is this satisfactory to you?"

"Whether it is, or not, makes no difference," Oscar said with quivering lips.

"But, my boy, we do it on your account," Koppel exclaimed.

"I had no idea of that. I do not desire it. I am perfectly contented here."

"My son," said Koppel very seriously, "it is not to be expected from you at present, that you should judge this subject rightly, and form a mature, intelligent decision. I am responsible for you, and I am the person to decide what is for the best for you. A child cannot require a fortune from his parents, for to accumulate wealth is not in the power of every man, but he may demand that he should have a country. It is the most important working capital a man can have, at least in our time, when individuality is worth nothing, unless it rests upon nationality. I should commit a sin against you for which I could never pardon myself, if I should separate you from the fellowship of your own countrymen. No other fellowship is possible for you."

"I have found another," Oscar retorted defiantly.

"You imagine now that you have. You would discover your mistake at every decisive turning-point of your life, but then it would be too late. I understand perfectly that it dismays you to break the ties of habit, and to be obliged to pull down many air-castles. But a few years hence you will be grateful to me that I did not spare you this pain."

Oscar appeared to recognize the fact that it was useless to contend against his father's views. "May I ask," he said, "when we are to leave Paris?"

"In all probability, a year from next October," was the reply. "But you, of course, must go in August of the present year, to enter the German gymnasium."

"Why can I not remain here as long as you do?" Oscar asked in great surprise.

Koppel explained it to him. In Paris, he could not prepare for the German examination. This could only be done in a German school, and with the most exemplary industry would require at least a year. Hence, if he did not go to Freienwald for a year, it would be so much wasted time, and that could not be thought of.

Oscar made no further opposition, and also remained silent, while his father, at much length, strove to encourage him, to awaken his interest in German life, to point out to him the brilliant future which awaited him in Germany, precisely, if he would seek to make himself a place among those who strove to bring the German and the French intellectual life into harmony with each other. Receiving no response to his urgent appeals, Koppel cut the interview short, with the words: "This is all for your advantage, and you will very soon see it yourself."

Oscar withdrew to his room, making the excuse that he had work to do. He, however, did nothing; but sat, with his face hidden by his hands, at his little table, until it was quite dark. The first heavy grief of his life took possession of his unprepared and astonished soul. He seemed to be struck dumb under the stress. Gladly he would have shut his mental as well as his bodily eyes that he might not see the future, but this was impossible; he was compelled to look at it, in spite of the desolation with which it filled him. It was a wreck, in whose presence he could have wrung his hands. For years, he had had everything planned to his satisfaction. He would write novels and plays; the great dailies would buy the former, the Odéon and later, the Français, would perform the latter. He would be the leader of the new poetical school; soon he would wear the red ribbon in his button-hole; after a suitable time he would reach the lion-guarded door of the Mazarin palace. The day that he should be received into the Academy, his people should sit under the dome, and hear his enter-

ing discourse. What a triumph if, in the discourse of welcome, his academic godfather should make mention of his German father! This was not usual, indeed it seemed paradoxical, and yet, in reality, it was natural. He was a belated scion of those Franks who made themselves a home in Gaul, and through whom God wrought the great deeds of France, the "*Gesta Dei per Francos*." He came, fourteen centuries later, to claim his right as liegeman of Chlodwig, and to continue his work for the fame of France, as his forefathers had done.

And now, all this beautiful, well-ordered dream-world was shattered at a blow, and its ruins lay in shapeless desolation. What would become of him? He could form no idea whatever. Could he part from the friends with whom he had united to form a consecrated band, shield by shield, to capture wreath and palm? Could he break with the periodicals that had procured him his first successes?

And Blanche, sweet little Blanche? How about her? Could he live without her, far away from her? Could he give her up? It was an abyss, full of clouds, into which his affrighted gaze plunged. Bitterness against his own father filled his mind. Why had he ever left Berlin? Why had he not always held up before his children the idea that they were to return to Germany? Then, Oscar's mind would have steeled itself against everything attractive, caressing and cordial in the French nature; and he would have remained, consciously, a stranger, a guest, whose luggage was not unpacked. Now, however, he felt himself at home here, not having been notified otherwise by his father. Was it right that the father should after all this time suddenly issue marching orders? So cruel an interference in a son's destiny exceeded a father's rights. There could be no obligation for him to submit to it. He was old enough to shape his fate for himself. He would defend his own personality. He would refuse to leave Paris. Should his father still insist, he would abandon the parental home and seek to support himself. That probably would not be so

very difficult. He repeated to himself the oft-read, oft-heard stories of great painters and great authors, who, younger than he was now, had been flung into the whirlpool of Paris life, and without aid, merely by their own desperate resolve, had kept their heads above water. He had friends and acquaintances and already had relations with the press. Hitherto, he had despised the idea of writing for money. For the future, he was willing to do it. And if worst came to worst, what then? Then he must wander for a few months or years in the Bohemian wilderness before reaching the Canaan of success.

This prospect had no terrors for him. It must be very amusing now and then through a summer night, to dream under the arch of a bridge, to recite a poem and get a free supper for it at the Black Cat, to work at a zinc-table in a pot-house of Montmartre.

To be sure—how would it be about Blanche? What would happen to her? From her he would not be separated, not even in Bohemia! Very well, with her he would have a Bohemia *à deux*, vastly more fascinating than a solitary one. The man whom this free existence of careless, cooing birds of the air did not make a triumphant poet must, indeed, be an earth-grubbing creature!

His mother and sister would be distressed about him, but not for long, for he would do nothing ignoble; proudly and gallantly he would endure poverty, and very soon he would show them by works of rare merit, that it was with no base ends in view that he had asserted his independence.

His decision was made, but it was repugnant to him to oppose his father face to face. Accordingly, he wrote him a letter making known that he could not leave Paris. He had begun his career in France, he wrote, and he wished to go on with it here. He begged his father to believe that he made the decision in no undutiful spirit, but simply because he had a clearer idea of what was necessary for himself than any parent, however affectionate and clear-sighted, could have.

It was the first time in his life that Oscar had ever had occasion to write to his father. The language used by the parents with their children had always remained German; Oscar and Elsa, with each other, used French invariably; and of late years, Oscar had often used French with his father, when the two were alone together. In this letter, the use of French was natural to him therefore, and the more so, because he had had very little practice in writing German.

The next morning, he left the letter on the table in the parlour when he went to school. There his father would be sure to find it when he went to have his after-breakfast pipe and read the paper, before he, too, went out.

Frau Käthe saw it first, and was greatly shocked when she recognized Oscar's handwriting. She ran to Koppel, who was still at the breakfast-table: "Just look at this!" she cried, "what can it mean?"

Koppel opened the letter, and read it through, with sombre face; then he handed it to his wife: "A declaration of war," he said; "and, appropriately, in French."

"There was no intention in that," Frau Käthe rejoined hastily, before she herself had read a word. She went through the letter twice; once as rapidly as possible, then, more carefully; and then she laid it upon the table and looked anxiously at her husband.

"Well, what do you say now?" Koppel asked.

"I—I think we must avoid any kind of violence. We should make the poor boy only the more stubborn. Let him go his own way for a time. When he sees us leaving Paris, he will be very sure to come too, of his own accord."

"And, meantime, shall we let the matter rest, and say nothing at all about it?"

"If you are willing, I will talk with him. To me, he might listen, perhaps."

"Or, he will twist you round his fingers—which is much more probable. Dear, this is a serious matter, and it must be handled seriously. Are you willing to spend the rest of your life in Paris?"

"I came to Paris with you, without saying a word. If it must be—"

"No, it must not be. At that time I was grateful to you for your acquiescence. Now, your self-sacrifice would be unnecessary. The boy is irrational on this subject. We must not yield to him. He strives against his own welfare."

"But to force upon him an advantage that he is resolved not to have—"

"What is your idea about the matter, then? Are we to leave him here, and ourselves, go away? We could not do that, surely. Or shall we, on his account, abandon our plans, and remain here? That, he cannot expect. We are not mere appendages to our son, however much talent he may possess. We have laboured hard for him, we are willing still to labour, but we have no occasion to make a needless sacrifice of our own wishes on his account."

"*Ach!* Hugo, be not so harsh against him."

"Certainly not, dear. I only purpose to say to him calmly that we are going to Germany, and the matter drops there."

"Let me say it to him."

"I have no objection to that."

At noon, Oscar came home later than usual. He had walked for half an hour in the Luxembourg Garden, and had made himself ready for crises and conflicts. When he rang, his mother opened the door. She took him by the hand and led him through the room where Koppel sat—whom his son saluted in passing, without lifting his eyes—and went with the boy into his own room.

"What is this idea of yours," she said, "to write a cold letter to your father in a foreign language—"

"What does papa say?" Oscar interrupted her.

"He is displeased, of course. He has reason to be. You must beg his pardon."

"I am not conscious of having been disrespectful towards papa. I know no reason why I should beg his pardon. Does he insist upon as he says?"

"For the present, there will nothing done. Later, we shall see."

"Please, mamma, a definite answer. Will papa let me stay here, or not?"

"He thinks that it is better for you to go to Germany. But things never come out as bad as we expect."

"Very well, mamma. I know what I have to do."

"What you have to do is to remain quiet, and go on as usual. For the present, that is enough."

"Of course, mamma, of course," Oscar replied, and kissed his mother's hand. She drew him into her arms and coaxed him: "Do not give yourself unnecessary anxiety, and do not feel bitterly about all this. Everything will come out right in the end."

"Certainly," he replied, "certainly." And he gently extricated himself from her embrace.

At table, his father, as usual, asked about the news at school. Not a word was said about the letter. Koppel, however, led the conversation purposely toward Germany, and conversed with his mother, Frau Käthe and Elsa, during the entire meal, about the future of their lives at home. Oscar could not but be aware that this was the answer to his letter.

Of his teacher's lecture that afternoon but little clung in his memory. When school was out he walked for two hours in the streets and along the quays, and did not come home until supper-time. After supper he went to his own room and wrote the following letter:

"MY DEAREST BLANCHE:

"I am in the presence of a momentous decision.

"My father has formed the design of sending me to Germany. It is proposed that I become acquainted with the delights of student beer-drinking and duelling, and later, with barrackyard flowers of speech and parade marches after having swallowed a ramrod. It appears that this knowledge is essential for my happiness.

"I have no desire to leave Paris. In vain I search

my own mind : I have not the slightest longing for the Prussian drill. This, perhaps, is very wrong in me, but it is the fact.

"My father is a devoted patriot. He knows best how he can reconcile this with the Socialism to which, at least earlier in his life, he gave his allegiance. But it is not my affair to criticize him. He feels as men felt in his time. He is right. But I am right, also. We are both right, as is proper in a well-written tragedy.

"To me, Germany is known only by hearsay—from the fond reminiscences of my parents—from the poems and fairy-tales, which delight me—from French accounts, which horrify me. I am willing to feel for the home of my ancestors a tender, affectionate longing. This is possible, only at a distance. If I were to live there, I fear that the reality would be repugnant to me, for I know from experience that I feel as a Frenchman, and what effect Germany has upon French nerves, I have regretfully learned from many books.

"Paris, you understand, is the embodiment of all that gives life its value to me; it is my youth, my friendship, my hopes, my ambition. And, more than all—it is my Blanche! I cannot exist separated from you. Where you live, I will live also.

"My adored girl, it may become necessary for me to leave home. In that case a time of trial begins for me. I can bear it well and easily, if I feel that I can count upon you.

"Will you be mine? Will you be the prize of my warfare? Will you share my fate which at first will be, perhaps, poverty—with the intoxication of love and all the star-pictures of hope—but later, will be fame? If you will, I can cheerfully leave my parents' house and challenge life in the lists.

"You understand, my dove, that this important point must be settled with certainty. It must be fully and freely talked over between us. I will expect you in front of the house to-morrow evening, at or after nine o'clock. You can easily steal out.

Your absence will, no doubt, be soon observed, but this will be of no consequence. If you come to me absolutely, as I hope, as I ask, there will be no concealment necessary. But in our love, in our happiness, we shall find strength to defy all.

“And so, good-bye until to-morrow, my Blanche! Do not keep me waiting, for every minute will be torture! And until then, a thousand kisses from your
OSCAR.”

It was late before this letter was finished. He desired to put it at once in the place where Blanche would find it; but he was accustomed to hide his letters under the mat in the afternoon when he went to school. At that hour of the day there was the least probability of any uncalled-for disturbance of the mat, and between two o'clock and five Blanche could most easily, for a moment, slip out unnoticed from her door. It had now become extremely difficult for her to escape supervision, even for a very short time, for since Adèle had known of her meeting Oscar in the street, the older sister never let her go out of her sight, especially when, without visible occasion, Blanche attempted to go to the door or out on to the stairs.

This constant watch, which was most strict at the hours when Oscar was out of school, irritated Blanche extremely. She regarded herself as a prisoner. She gave up her former habit of answering the bell when it rang, for she knew that Adèle would start at the same moment and would be at her side as she opened the door. The girl became melancholy and downcast, and from morning till night her thoughts were busy with mad and desperate schemes for breaking through this detested guard.

Oscar, on this occasion, for once laid his letter in the usual place in the evening, with the hope that early in the day Blanche would find an opportunity to get it. His impatience to have the letter, if not in the hands of his loved one, at least at her door as soon as possible, was his ruin. The following day hap-

pened to be the one on which the concierge proposed to clean the stairs, performing this task at a very early hour in the morning. He, of course, lifted the mat at the Masmajours' door and the letter became visible. He noticed that there was no address on the envelope. It occurred to him that it was one of the begging letters, or hairdresser's cards, which in spite of all his oversight would now and then slip into the house, and he pushed it through under the door into the Masmajours' anteroom. As the woman coming for her day's work arrived soon after, the letter fell at once under the eyes of Adèle, who opened the door. She picked it up, she opened it and read it through. Her heart stood still, and it seemed to her she should faint. She saw her worst fears realized. It had come to such a thing as this! They wrote to one another letters of such a kind! He had dared to propose to Blanche to lead with him the life of a castaway! She could no longer bear the responsibility alone. She must reveal all to her mother.

Madame Masmajour was in the kitchen preparing the morning coffee. Adèle came in and said:

"Mamma, come here! I have something to tell you."

Madame Masmajour was so shocked at the tone and manner of the girl that she began to tremble and very nearly dropped the milk-can which she had in her hand.

"What is the matter, Adèle?" she asked, much distressed. Adèle with a look warned her not to speak in the presence of the woman, who was also in the kitchen, and indicated that her mother must come with her. She then preceded her into the dining-room, laid her finger on her lips, pointed to the adjacent bedroom where Masmajour, still in bed, was reading his *Petit Journal* and awaiting his coffee, and gave her mother the letter.

Madame Masmajour read the letter through, growing paler as she read, and when she had finished, the sheet dropped from her relaxed hands. Adèle picked it up, put it in her pocket, put her arms around her

mother and whispered in her ear : " Mamma, I beg you to calm yourself ; I am sure things are not so bad as you would think from this letter. But something must be done."

" How did you get it ?" Madame Masmajour asked, in a low voice.

" I found it by the door."

" Give it to me."

Adèle obeyed. Madame Masmajour went through the letter a second time.

" This has been going on for a long while," she said, still speaking low. " Adèle ! you knew it. Look at me."

Adèle hung her head.

" And you did not tell me. How could you do so ?"

" Ah, mamma, forgive me ! I thought they were both children, and I could not bear to be a tell-tale."

" A tell-tale ! And your sister in danger like that ?" She wrung her hands in silent despair, and the tears began falling.

Adèle wiped the tears away with her handkerchief, stroked her mother's face tenderly and her hands, and kissed her many times, and then she whispered impressively : " Mamma, comfort yourself ! I beg you, dear mamma ! It is not as bad as it seems. I have been on the watch ; I have had her in my sight every moment. I can answer for it with my life."

" That is well, my child," Madame Masmajour said. " I will talk with Blanche."

" Do not be harsh with her, mamma darling ; this fellow has turned her head ; she is like a person who is ill, and you know yourself how obstinate she is. One must be very gentle with her or you do harm. May I be there when you speak to her ?"

To this, Madame Masmajour consented. She rose, and passed through her own room into her daughters' where Blanche, unsuspecting, was making her bed. Adèle remained standing near the door. Madame Masmajour went up to Blanche, put one arm around her waist, with the other hand smoothed the heavy

black hair back from the girl's forehead, and said, with eyes full of tears: "My poor child, Blanche, what have I just learned? What are you doing? Do you wish to break your mother's heart?"

With extreme surprise, Blanche started back and stammered: "What is it, mamma? I do not understand——"

"Oh, Blanche, you understand," the mother said, "how can you try to pretend anything with me? Oscar Koppel——"

Blanche grew very red, then all the colour went away from her face. She cast a look of rage and contempt at Adèle; and hissed, between her shut teeth: "Oh, you snake! you spy!"

Her mother laid her hand quickly upon the girl's mouth: "Unhappy girl! will you be silent! But first beg your sister to forgive you. She loves you. Who can say whether you deserve to be loved any longer! Beg her to forgive you, Blanche."

Blanche was silent; Adèle came forward; she took her sister's hand, and said softly: "I do forgive you, Blanche, even if you do not ask it. You are deceived."

Blanche still remained silent, but she did not draw away her hand, which was ice-cold to Adèle's touch.

Madame Masmajour seated herself, and drew Blanche down upon her lap. "Is it for this that I brought you up?" she said, sobbing. "Is it thus that you honour your parents?"

Blanche threw back her head. "Mamma," she said, "I can look you in the face. I have done nothing disgraceful?"

"Does a girl let herself be called '*tu*' by a young man? Does she let him send her 'a thousand kisses' in a letter?" Upon which, Madame Masmajour drew from her pocket the letter, and held it up before the girl's eyes.

Blanche again coloured violently, and became extremely confused. "Is the letter for me?" she stammered, and felt, at once, that she had made a mistake.

"Yes, unhappy girl, and it is not the first? Answer me."

Blanche hung her head. "It was very indiscreet," she said; "I often told him so. But he thought it was no harm."

"No harm? when he proposes to you to run away with him?"

Blanche became extremely attentive. That was something new, indeed! She had such a desire to see the letter, but she dare not ask for it. She, to run away? She knew nothing of this; and feeling herself innocent here, she made the most of it, and went on with increasing confidence: "But mother, you will not take that seriously. He is a poet. To be carried off—in a sedan-chair, with a guard of musketeers—that sort of thing is not done in these days!"

"No. But to ruin a girl can be done now, just as much as ever."

"Mamma, he has no such idea. He loves me too well, and respects me too much."

"He gives no proof of it, when he writes you shameless letters secretly. Do you not feel that there must be something wrong in it, since you seek to conceal it from your mother?"

"We never thought of anything wrong. We love each other; and by and by, when he is independent, he will ask your permission to marry me."

"How can you talk such nonsense? I have always thought you were quite a sensible girl. I could laugh, if it were not such a sad thing." She wiped the tears away, which had continued to fall all the time.

Blanche said nothing, but sighed heavily.

Madame Masmajour began anew: "Blanche!" she said, "be reasonable and obedient. Think no more about him. You must promise me this."

"I cannot promise," Blanche replied, in a low voice.

"Why not?"

"Because I love him."

"Child," the mother said, "this is all imagination; it will pass away. It is only a blaze of straw, that will

go out at once, if it is not kept alive. You must never see him again."

"How can I help that, mamma, unless I bandage my eyes? He is always at his window; we visit each other——"

"There'll be no more visiting," Madame Masmajour exclaimed, "you may be quite sure of that!"

"Shall we never see Elsa and her mother any more?" Adèle asked, in much alarm. "What will they think?"

"Madame Koppel must hear what has happened," Madame Masmajour replied.

"Mother, don't do that, please," Blanche begged anxiously, "the poor fellow must not have any trouble with his family on my account."

"My poor child, if we were rich," the mother said, "I would leave this house at once, or I would send you to our relatives in the South. Our circumstances make this impossible. We must, for the present, remain where we are. Therefore, we must call upon our neighbours to use their influence over their son. Nothing will happen to him except that he will not come here any more, or send you any more letters. And you must promise me, my daughter, that you will have nothing to do with him for the future. I trust you, if you promise it, you know."

Blanche made no answer.

"Blanche, you must promise me," the mother said. "Unless you promise, there is only one thing that I can do; it is to go back to Nîmes with you. I have worked hard to make myself a position here, but I shall give up Paris, if that is the only way in which I can save my child."

"I promise," the girl said. Madame Masmajour released her, and rose to her feet. "You promise, by the Blessed Virgin, that you will not deceive me in any way about this?" She lifted her hand towards a framed picture of the Madonna which hung above the little bed, and behind which there had been, since Easter, a consecrated palm.

"I promise," Blanche said.

Madame Masmajour crossed the girl and crossed herself: then she said: "God bless you, and deliver you from all evil!" She kissed her long and tenderly, and then turned to leave the room. Then Blanche caught her by the arm, and whispered shyly: "May I—see the letter?"

"Never, my child," the mother exclaimed indignantly; "you can do without that!" And she went out quickly.

It was very hard and bitter to do it, but there seemed no other way: two hours later Madame Masmajour rang at the Koppels' door, and asked Frau Käthe if she could speak with her for a few minutes. To her great satisfaction Frau Käthe indicated to Elsa who was present as they came in, that she might leave the room. Frau Käthe's own anxiety led her to feel that there was something unusual in her visitor's mind, and suggested to her the idea that it was better they should be alone with each other.

Madame Masmajour came at once to the point. "It is on a painful errand that I come, Madame Koppel," she said. "Will you look at this letter, which your son has written to my daughter Blanche."

Frau Käthe took the letter, which her neighbour held out to her. She read it, with wide-open, horror-struck eyes. When she had finished she grasped Madame Masmajour's hands nervously, and stammered: "I am very much obliged to you—it is a great service that you have done me—I had no idea that things had gone so far as this with the poor fellow!"

Madame Masmajour was surprised and disconcerted. She was not sure that she rightly understood, for, in her excitement, Frau Käthe's French was worse than usual.

"I do not know that you have any reason to thank me—" she began.

"Why, certainly," Frau Käthe said, "now that I know how it is, I can try to make it right. There is a mistake. We had no idea of using force. There will surely be some other way out."

"What are you speaking of, Madame Koppel?"

said Madame Masmajour, herself in turn extremely disconcerted.

"Of his idea of leaving us. *Ach!* how much distress one has with boys! You are lucky that you have daughters only, Madame Masmajour."

"Do you really think that it is anything very pleasant to be obliged to defend my daughter against your son's pursuit?" Madame Masmajour said in a low voice, but with an unmistakable emphasis of distress.

Frau Käthe looked at her in amazement; then she read the letter a second time. She had at first observed nothing but those passages in it which concerned Oscar's break with his parents, as Madame Masmajour had only noticed those which made known his intentions towards Blanche. And now she for the first time became aware of them, and murmured, shaking her head: "Who could have suspected such a thing?"

"Of course, after this," Madame Masmajour went on resolutely, "I shall watch Blanche with the utmost care, but I shall expect also that you will support me, on your part."

"I will have it out with my son, you may depend," was the reply.

"Specially I beg you to make him understand," said Madame Masmajour, "that his visits to us must cease. Between such good neighbours as we have been, this is most unfortunate; but I hope the situation will not remain as it is very long. I shall make every possible effort to leave the house."

Frau Käthe a second time grasped her visitor's hand. "I am extremely sorry," she said, "that this has occurred. *Ach!* the children get beyond us. As soon as my husband comes home, he shall know it all."

"Do you really think that is advisable? Things like these the mothers can deal with better, perhaps? We women understand; men spoil everything they touch. I love my husband, as is my duty, but I cannot forget that this disgrace would never have occurred, had we not, through his fault, been ruined."

"Disgrace? dear Madame Masmajour, we will keep it as quiet as possible."

"What would you say, if any one had written in this strain to Mademoiselle Elsa?"

"Very true. I can understand how you feel about it. But, after all, it is harmless child's play. They are both so young—"

"They are too young to act rationally, but they are old enough to disgrace themselves for ever."

"If only my son were ten years older than he is, I should have been very much pleased with this. Mademoiselle Blanche is a charming girl, and I could wish no more attractive daughter-in-law."

"Thank you, Madame Koppel. I feel myself that the man who gets my Blanche will be fortunate. But as we are situated, nothing of this kind can be thought of. All that we can do, is to try to bring our two children to reason."

"I cannot think that my son would be willing to cause you further trouble. I am sure that he will listen to his mother."

Madame Masmajour rose. Frau Käthe accompanied her to the door. In the ante-room her feelings overpowered her and she put her arms around the sad-eyed little woman. "Do not bear a grudge against us," she said; "we should be most sorry to lose your friendship."

"I do not forget my indebtedness to you," Madame Masmajour replied. "And I feel sure that my child's honour is dear to you, also."

Both of the mothers had wet eyes, and they parted with a long, cordial clasp of hands.

Frau Käthe could not keep the secret for a minute when Elsa rushed in and demanded: "What did Madame Masmajour want?" She told her daughter every word, and gave her Oscar's letter to read. Elsa was at first extremely surprised, and took great offence that there should be a love affair between Oscar and Blanche. That green boy! Scarcely more than a baby! He ought to be ashamed to be thinking of girls! Then she reflected, and many things became

clear to her. Nothing had escaped her notice, but she had considered her brother a boy, and would not understand what his agitation, his impatience, his many attentions and his hovering about Blanche signified. Now she could no longer reject the true explanation of all this, and she reproached herself that she had not sought to bring him to reason. It seemed to her strange that her mother—of course much more experienced than herself—should have noticed nothing, and she could not help saying to her:

“We have not taken Oscar as seriously as we ought. With his moustache and his cigarettes we ought to have expected this.”

All through dinner Frau Käthe controlled her feelings and observed Oscar stealthily. It made her heart ache. The poor fellow! he looked so pale and unnerved, his eyes fixed upon vacancy like one listening to a voice within, and he scarcely ate. But it was impossible to spare him; the father must hear the whole. When the meal was ended, Frau Käthe took her husband aside, and told him all.

“That’s a fine story!” Koppel exclaimed, when she ceased. “To abandon his parents, to bring a respectable girl to ruin, to renounce and ridicule his native land—a promising lad, indeed! You have reason to be proud of this young gentleman, your son!”

“He is just as much your son as he is mine!” retorted Frau Käthe indignantly. “Oscar did not learn this at home with me, but at the school to which you sent him.”

Koppel was silent, weighed down with anxiety; he twisted the letter in his hands. “I will settle with him for this when the time comes,” he said. “In the meantime, we will make amends to these good people for the boy’s foolish conduct. Madame Masmajour sees what is right, as she always does. It will not do to go on living in the same house. Since we cannot, on the instant, get away, we must help Madame Masmajour to go.” And he made known to his wife that he had decided to furnish their neighbour with the 10,000 francs of which she had need. He did not feel

that he made a sacrifice, but that it was a good and safe investment, for he had entire confidence in Madame Masmajour's ability. Frau Käthe was very ready to agree to this. It was a great relief to her that her husband's first thought was to make good the wrong Oscar had done, rather than to punish the wrong-doer.

Koppel had made the decision without much consideration. The ruble-Russians kept on falling; he already knew that on settling-day at the close of the month, he should have to pay at least 16,000 francs. He would, therefore, be obliged to give another package of 25 Almadens, for the 11,000 francs that he had lying in his box, would not be enough to bring the account out even; so he might as well lend this amount to Madame Masmajour as to leave it idle.

He gave the subject more thought, however, in the afternoon, and became confirmed in his first decision; accordingly, on his return from school, he went to Madame Masmajour to tell her that the 10,000 francs were at her service. To Oscar's letter he made not the slightest reference; at the same time the connection of ideas was perfectly clear to Madame Masmajour and caused her painful embarrassment. Her reason told her that it was a matter of business, pure and simple. For some weeks she had been seeking for money; she would have taken it from any one who had it to lend. She felt that it would be well used in her hands; there was no reasonable ground why she should not accept it willingly from Koppel, but in her soul there was something like resistance. She felt it painful, almost shameful, that there should be an attempt to atone with money what might have been a mortal disgrace. In her confusion she said scarcely a word of thanks, and answered only that, as soon as her husband came in, she would let him know and that he would come and talk the matter over with Koppel, upon which the latter, understanding her feeling, left her, saying only, that he should be very glad to see Monsieur Masmajour about it.

At supper-time, Oscar was even more absent-minded

and self-absorbed than he had been at noon, and disappeared into his own room almost before the last morsels were eaten. He lay at his window on the watch for some little signal from Blanche, before he should, at the designated time—still three-quarters of an hour distant—go down into the street. Suddenly he felt a light touch on his shoulder. He started, and turned quickly. Elsa was there, and she looked at him without saying a word.

"What is it?" he said, in a disappointed tone.

But Elsa still looked at him in silence.

"What do you want?" he repeated impatiently.

"Poor fellow! you have got into a fine scrape. Your letter to Blanche fell into her mother's hands."

He stared at her open-mouthed. If the ground had yawned beneath his feet, he could not have been more shocked. He made no answer, but he twisted the left end of his tiny moustache mechanically round and round as if he were losing his wits.

Elsa felt sorry for him. "It will be a lesson to you, I hope," she said, "you will leave the poor girl in peace henceforward."

He scarcely noticed what she was saying, but he felt the tone of her voice. "What did they say?" he asked, anxiously.

"You may suppose that they were not very much pleased."

"Did Blanche do nothing?"

"It was understood to be nobody's fault but yours."

"That is so," he said, hastily.

"But you must be reasonable, now, Oscar, you really must! You are not to go to the Masmajours' any more, and Blanche will not come here again. And if you try one single time again to communicate with her by writing, her parents will put her in a convent."

"I am never to see her any more!" Oscar murmured; "that is impossible; I can't bear it; nor Blanche, I am sure of that! Elsa, my dear sister, are you against us, also?"

Elsa smiled. "I am not against anyone," she said, "only I don't want anyone to do what is foolish."

"There is nothing foolish in two people's loving each other."

"You are both rather young."

"It is you who are foolish, Elsa. You know well enough that we are not children. Listen, Elsa. You will see Blanche?"

"Unless they have to send her away on your account."

"That will never happen," her brother said. "You must prevent it. You can. You must re-assure her parents. Please, Elsa, to do it. And when you see Blanche, you must tell her that I shall remain true to her, and she must remain true to me, even though we do not see each other or hear from each other. And even if it is years, she must wait, and trust in me. I shall think of her and I shall work for her sake. I shall finish my studies and I shall gain real success. Then I shall come and take her; and they will not object. Elsa, will you tell her this from me?"

Elsa was very much amused with the devout earnestness of what he said, and with its melancholy ardour; but, at the same time, there was something touching in it.

"That is good," she said, "I am glad you mean so honourably toward her. If a love is pure and honest it will succeed in the end. Only be steadfast, and try to become worthy, and deserve the girl you love. I am very glad you have such a high aim. It will bring you happiness."

A great burden seemed to be lifted from Oscar's mind, and he wanted to be told all the particulars as to the discovery of the letter, and what his parents had said, and how Blanche had conducted herself, and whether Adèle was angry with them; and he could not hear enough, with all that his sister good-naturedly related. He would not have wearied in pouring out his feelings, till midnight and after, if Elsa had not finally torn herself away and told him he must go to bed.

On the following day, in the presence of a notary, the business between Koppel and Madame Masmajour was properly transacted, after the latter had satisfied herself, in a prolonged conversation with Adèle on the subject that there would be no sacrifice of her own dignity in accepting Koppel's offer. Masmajour was also present, although he had nothing to say, the business being in Madame Masmajour's name solely. Nothing was told him in regard to Oscar and Blanche, and he could not understand why his wife was in such a hurry to leave the apartment, which could be given up only in October, and must be paid for until that time, unless it could be sub-let. As his wife assured him, however, that it must be so, he agreed in what she said, as was his commendable custom.

Madame Masmajour set about work with her usual energy. In three days she had discovered a very pleasant entresol, in the rue Godot-de-Mauroy, entirely suited to her purposes, and ten days more sufficed to have the rooms for customers, the salon and the anteroom, charmingly arranged. During this time Elsa was much with Blanche; always, whenever Madame Masmajour required Adèle's assistance at the new place. The older girl treated Blanche as an afflicted sister, and in the end, the latter gave her the most lavish confidence. Blanche found it easier to do without Oscar since Elsa's presence was almost a compensation to her for the other's loss.

A fortnight from the day when the unfortunate letter was discovered, the Masmajour family quitted the house. Oscar was on the watch, as of old, but he did not catch a glimpse of Blanche, for she had been sent over to the new house very early in the morning with her father. As he saw the household goods of their neighbours carried out, piece by piece, and loaded upon the great wagon before the door, it seemed to him as if Blanche had been not merely snatched away from the house, but also from the earth, from the entire world, from his life; and he shuddered to think what a vast gap the disappearance of one single little girl could produce.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FICKLE GODDESS.

THE settlement at the end of May was even worse for Koppel than he had feared. Twenty-five Almadens were not enough to meet the difference; a second package of twenty-five had to take the road to the cashier's desk in the rue de Provence. The ruble-Russians had gone down to 74, and he had lost on them 75,000 francs. Also, for the last three weeks, the Almadens had made no gain, remaining at first stationary, then dropping slowly, but steadily. From their highest quotation, 810 francs, they had gone down to 785, at the end of May. The drop was not so very much, but it was especially vexing to Koppel, inasmuch as it broke the agreeable routine of unbroken advance, which had come to seem to him like one of the unalterable laws of nature. If even Almaden weakened, what could be considered secure? Upon what could one rely? The stock was to reach 1,000 francs. This was like a contract which Fate had made with Koppel. At least he had a feeling that it was so, and upon this superstitious idea he built a blind confidence that was not destroyed but only irritated, when the Bourse teased him with what he regarded as foolish trifling, making short backward skips.

Before Koppel bought the unlucky ruble-Russians, his profits had already exceeded 270,000 francs, and there lay in his portfolio, counting in his wife's inheritance, a fortune of 350,000 francs. By the heavy decline in Russians and the slight one in Almadens, this property had been lessened, during the month of May, by 100,000 francs.

In the first fortnight of June the Bourse was unusually nervous. A Russian loan, which had been announced weeks before, was suddenly wrecked, for the reason that the Rothschilds who were to take it, at the

last moment drew back, apparently on account of a hostile attitude on the part of the Russian government toward the Jews. In a single session of the Bourse, the ruble-Russians fell five per cent. so that Koppel lost 40,000 francs in an afternoon. From this moment he became an anti-Semite. All the animosity which, as a socialist, he had formerly cherished against famous money-mongers, again filled its mind, but its wrath thundered exclusively against the Rothschilds and the Russian Jews.

And now messengers of evil followed close upon each other's heels. The newspapers asserted, first hesitatingly, then with more confidence, more frequency, and with details continually more abundant and more ominous, that the Russian harvests were in danger, that they had failed, that a formidable famine was impending. And to every one of these assertions, every new fact, every rumour, the Bourse responded with a further drop. A storm broke over all Russian government loans of whatever kind, and brought them, splintering and crashing, to the ground.

And in the midst of all this, suddenly Almadens, which had stood like a rock in the whirlwind, began first to weaken alarmingly, then to go down with a rush. The newspapers, which for a year had scarcely mentioned the word Almaden, now fell, as if by common consent, upon the quicksilver ring; they cried out against monopolies, they invited the interposition of government against a gang which had made itself master of an indispensable metal and only supplied it to consumers at double its natural price; they called it an outrage that such deeds of violence on the part of robber-knights of the present day should be permitted.

A very few newspapers timidly resisted the attack. They defended the ring on extraordinary grounds. It did not exploit the public, it merely regulated prices which, hitherto subject to arbitrary fluctuations, now, thanks to the syndicate, had remained for a long time unchanged; they mentioned that this was a great advantage to the consumers, who had now certainties to deal with, and were no longer in danger of being

caught unawares; that steadiness and security in business matters were a priceless boon, very cheaply bought by a slight increase in price of a commodity. The syndicate was doing an extremely useful and patriotic work; it had made France the centre of the world's traffic in quicksilver and had rescued this traffic from the former tyranny of the London market; it therefore deserved the gratitude of all good Frenchmen, and not the contumely with which it has regretably been assailed by persons whose motives were transparent. Speculation, however, manifestly considered the defence of far less importance than the attack, and every time the press delivered a blow at the quicksilver ring, the Bourse emphasized it with a fall in the price of Almadens. They lost in a day ten, then twenty francs, and the longer the retreat lasted, the more rapid it grew, till at last it broke into a wild panic. There came a day at the Bourse when Almadens fell to 60 francs. It was a crash, a wreck. At last Koppel was seized with extreme anxiety, and despatched a card to Pfister with the alarmed inquiry: "What is going on?"

The next morning, Pfister came to see Koppel at the school. It was the first time for months that he had been there. He had of late avoided meeting his customer.

"What is all this muddle in Almadens?" Koppel inquired.

"A weak hand was put out of the way. On this, a panic broke out, and then you know how it is at the Bourse. When one thing gets feeble, everything is made mince-meat of, the innocent with the guilty." He laughed, in a constrained way, and played with his *pince-nez*.

"But how can they in one day knock a good security about for 60 francs, without special course?"

"The Bourse never asks how. The Bourse is a feminine creature. She has nerves, She is subject to moods. On panic-days anything is possible. But you have no cause to worry. Only be glad that you are *not* obliged to go into this whirlwind, Herr Doctor.

There, men lose their heads, with the wildest rumours and lies storming in upon them. But you, happily, are outside of it, and you can watch the row quite at your ease. It is a storm. Keep quiet, and let it go by."

As Koppel remained silent and thoughtful, Pfiester went on, with his most insinuating and mysteriously confidential air: "Do you know, Herr Doctor, I have an impression that there is a new attack about to be made upon Almadens. These men are raging, and it is not strange they are. For the quicksilver ring has been quite too merciless with them. But the ring is very strong, and in the end its enemies will get worse than they had before. It is possible Almadens may go a little lower yet, but then there will come an upward movement and we shall go at a gallop to a thousand francs. Some of the first houses bought heavily yesterday at the close."

Pfiester talked with so much confidence, and such transcendent composure, that Koppel not only recovered his own, but he felt the shame of a Spartan boy at having betrayed alarm.

"My ruble-Russians are not conducting in a very praiseworthy manner," he said, to change the subject.

"Hum! Yes," Pfiester replied, a little confused; "in a general break everything has to take its share; it is always so."

"Do you know that up to the present moment, I have lost by this little diversion, 120,000 francs?"

Pfiester feigned surprise. "Is it as much as that?" he said.

"You can easily satisfy yourself. My 800 000 cost me 83, average price. They are now at 68¾. Compare the figures ——"

"Fortunately, you can stand your ground," Pfiester said, bowing.

"Is there any talk at present about their conversion into gold-bonds?"

"No. The talk is now, that there will be merely a reduction of the rate of interest."

"Then we are finely caught!" exclaimed Koppel, dismayed.

"It is just as likely to be a false report," Pfister hastened to say, and he took up his hat.

Koppel held him by the coat button. "What do you think? Ought I to get out of this?"

Pfister reluctantly turned back. "Well, Herr Doctor," he said, "it is hard to advise. Of course, if you get out of it, the loss is final. If you stand firm, you will probably see your price again. I have confidence in Russia. It appears to me that we have touched bottom. On the other hand, I can see that you might wish to unload. If you were to abandon half ——"

"Pardon me; either the security is good, in which case it would be wrong to throw 60,000 francs out of the window; or it is bad, and in that case, I can use both halves in securing something else."

"Your logic is unanswerable, Herr Doctor," Pfister said, rising.

The man's serenity irritated Koppel. "When you advised me to buy ruble-Russians, you were much more decided," he said.

Pfister assumed an injured air. "Now you see, Herr Doctor," he rejoined, "this is so every time. It is very foolish to advise a customer. If he wins, he congratulates himself on his own sharp-sightedness; if he loses, the adviser is to blame. And so, it is better for us never to go outside of our rôle."

"If you had spoken in this way before you gave me the advice ——"

"But, Herr Doctor, you really understand the case better than any of us; what can my advice signify to you? I am influenced by the talk that goes on around me. You look at the situation from a height. You have formed an opinion on statesmanlike and historical grounds. Do not let yourself be led astray by the ignorance and shortsightedness of the Bourse. In the end you will be in the right. You have no order for me to-day, Herr Doctor?"

"No," Koppel said abruptly; and Pfister departed

with all speed, evidently glad that the conversation was at an end.

On this day, also, Almaden dropped, though not with the frantic rapidity of the day before; and the evening papers were full of innuendos, that the quicksilver ring was in difficulties, that it had not been able to sell, that it had no more money to pay the mines for their output, that its destruction was imminent. The lines swam before Koppel's eyes, as he read these things. Suppose it were all true! Suppose part of it even were true! Then for him, it signified ruin. He must have certainty about this. He had ceased to meet Henneberg, but they had had no falling out; their intercourse merely had suffered temporary suspension; he would be doing nothing unworthy of himself if he went to see his old friend again after this long interval. He had scarcely more than thought of it before he was on his way to the rue de Téhéran.

But Henneberg was not at home. He was never there at that hour of the day, the concierge said.

"Does he not come home to meals?" Koppel asked. The concierge said that he did so only when he had company. And since last autumn, Koppel had never been invited once to the house! However, it was not worth while to be sensitive about this. He said that he would come again, and went away, but leaving no card.

After a night in which sleeplessness alternated with frightful dreams, and a forenoon in which he was extremely absent-minded in his class, he went again, about noon, to see Henneberg. He had to endure the detestable formality of the inquiry, the announcement through the speaking-tube, the waiting for the whistle in reply; and then it was made known to him that he might go up. When the servant in the ante-room received him and opened a door for him, he perceived Henneberg in the first salon, and the latter immediately came forward, with both hands extended, and greeted him in French: "My dear old friend, here you are after so long! This is good!"

The warm reception surprised Koppel extremely.

As he shook hands with Henneberg, he noticed that some one else was present, and at the same instant the other guest came forward, bent his head slightly, extended his hand, and exclaimed, with loud, high-pitched voice: "How are you, my dear professor? I am delighted to see you again."

Koppel at once recognized his old patron, the King of Laos, who carried his head high as ever; his glittering eyes were bold, though unsteady, but his face was paler and more bony, so that the white scar on the left cheek was less conspicuous than it had been.

"You are very kind," Koppel murmured, as he touched the king's fingers lightly. To give him a title was impossible to Koppel; on the other hand, simply to say "Monsieur" to him, was a discourtesy towards Henneberg, who had seemed at one time to share in the adventurer's playing at royalty.

"If I interrupt you, perhaps—" he said quickly to Henneberg.

"Not in the least, my dear friend," replied the other warmly, "not at all; come in here," and with a gesture he indicated the Moorish-Spanish room; at the same time turning towards the king, he said: "Good-bye, my dear king, *au revoir*!"

"But I should have been glad to go over the matter thoroughly with you," replied the king.

"Never mind about me," Koppel said; "I can wait," and as he spoke, he lifted the portière which separated the two salons.

"Oh, no, I knew that your time was always limited," Henneberg interrupted.

"I am the one who will wait, my dear baron," said the king; "I am in no haste."

"Impossible, my dear king," Henneberg rejoined. "It would be too long."

"No time is ever long that one spends here. Your salon is like a museum, where it is always a pleasure to linger."

"It would not be proper for me to keep you waiting here an hour, or perhaps two hours. Another time, my dear king, another time!"

The king looked savage ; murder gleamed in his eyes. With his left hand he pulled at his long, light moustache, and whispered a few words in Henneberg's ear.

" I will write to you, my dear king, I will write to you," Henneberg said, and he rang for the servant, who at once appeared in the doorway.

There was nothing for the king to do but to go ; he left the salon in silence, without looking towards Henneberg, who accompanied him half across the anteroom, and then rapidly returned.

" Your arrival was most welcome, my dear Koppel," he said cordially, dropping into a seat on the sofa beside his visitor. " If it had not been for you, I could not have shaken him off for the rest of the day."

" Does he still amuse himself with his burlesque of royalty ?"

" Burlesque ! You have hit it exactly. It really is a frightfully tiresome melodrama. The fellow bores me to death, and there is no possibility of protecting oneself from him. What a power there is in a mere word ! Would you believe it, my people cannot succeed in sending him away ? It is no use for me to give orders, the fellow comes, and coolly forces his way in ; and my men have not the courage to stop him. When I make a row, they reply piously : ' But we cannot ! A king ! ' "

" What is it that he wants ?"

" You can imagine ! Money it is that he wants ! He desires to return to his kingdom, he says ; his absence has been taken advantage of by evil-disposed persons to excite revolt ; he must purchase weapons and hire troops ; for which purposes he requires ready money. I have a suspicion myself that he is more afraid of his creditors here than of the Laotian rebels."

" An ordinary swindler ! The fellow really is uninteresting."

" I would not say that. There is something in him, after all. It would amuse me to send him back to his land merely to see how the affair would come

out. But this special performance would cost too much ; the times are not favourable just now."

Henneberg himself had given Koppel the handle for which he had been wishing.

"Isn't everything doing well?" he asked.

"What do you mean by that?" Henneberg rejoined, throwing his head back.

"You complain of the times, which is a new thing for you to do."

"I did not intend it. I only meant that it would require about a million francs to put this Primeval-Forest Spectacular Drama on the stage, and that I had other uses for the money just now."

"Is it true, then, what I read in the papers? That your syndicate is attacked, and that you are obliged to defend it?"

"Of course it's a battle ; and I hold it wise to bring all my forces into the field. God is, undoubtedly, on the side of the heaviest battalions. It is impossible to have too strong an army on the field."

"I confess the papers have made me anxious ; and that is why I came to see you."

"You are very kind. But you have no cause to worry about me. I know well enough what the newspaper campaign against me costs. The enemy are of opinion that they have not lost hair enough yet. Very well. I am ready to shear them again." He gave a short laugh with an evil grimace which lifted the corners of his mouth, showing the points of the canine teeth.

Koppel had noticed him closely while they talked, and was struck with the change in his friend's face during the past year. His hair had grown thin about the temples, and many white threads showed in the brown of the close-cropped pointed beard ; a constant, cynical smile had drawn Mephistophelian furrows around the nose and lips, and the eyes, behind the tired wrinkled lids, looked pitilessly hard. Henneberg's evident physical decadence caused Koppel a shock. He believed that it was sympathy with his friend. In truth

it was a suspicion that his friend's appearance was an omen of evil for himself.

"It would be a good idea, then," at last he ventured to say, "to sell Almaden since it is so butchered by your enemies?"

Henneberg looked keenly at him. "Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I thought you would, perhaps, condescend to give a friend a useful hint."

"My dear Koppel, that is very much as if you should suggest to the general of an army to betray to an unauthorized person his plan of a campaign. Such a blessed bit of sentimentalism you would scarcely expect of anybody but an old woman."

Koppel did not let himself be bluffed off. "If one had Almadens, then, you would advise him to keep or to sell? I mean if he were a friend."

"Are you that friend?" Henneberg said, roughly.

"Well—yes; I am."

"But, man! how could you go into speculation? A teacher, without means! The father of a family!" His tone was of a mingled displeasure and contempt which was very cutting to Koppel.

"My impression is," Koppel said, "that you and I were fellow-teachers once. The father of a family you were not, it is true, and it appears that speculation has not resulted badly in your case."

Henneberg's face twitched. "Well and good," he said, "if you wish to take me as a model—which is very complimentary to me—you must do just as I do. In the first place, I have never speculated. I have dealt with affairs; I have devised and carried out enterprises. This is a different matter. And, secondly, I have never asked advice of any man, but have acted on my own judgment."

This was plain talk. Koppel's first impulse was to rise and go. But he controlled himself. So much depended upon this conversation! "You are mistaken," he said; "neither have I speculated. I have bought a few Almadens, knowing that you were con-

cerned in the affair, and having confidence, myself, in your star."

"So?" Henneberg said, somewhat appeased. "How much have you?"

"Oh, a few shares," Koppel said, conscious that he reddened, as he spoke; "about ten."

"What did you pay for them?"

"About 530 francs."

"Well, what is the matter, then? You can get out of it at this moment with 150 francs profit on a share."

"But they have been as high as 810 francs. And it is not pleasant to give up good money that you have had once in your pocket."

"My dear Koppel, I shall do all that in me lies to bring Almadens up to 1000—up to 1500—francs. But, since you are anxious, and since you can, to-day, sell, not only without loss, but with brilliant gain, I must advise you, as a matter of the simplest common sense, to turn your ten Almaden certificates of stock into money. With battles of giants, small men have nothing to do. Even as mere lookers-on, they experience more alarm than is good for their health."

"My nerves are not so feeble as you think. I hope you giants may not find the battle any worse for your health than I, the small man, find looking on at it to be."

"It has been bad for my health," Henneberg said grimly; "but after the victory, one recuperates."

"Do you think it is worth while to poison one's short life with excitements like this? Certainly you have no need to do it?"

"What can I do, my dear Koppel? I was never made for cutting coupons and growing fat over it. I require things on a broad scale, great activity, a destiny transcending the commonplace lot. I must live amid the scenes of an exciting drama, and be its hero."

"Life on any scale, broad or narrow, admits of that," Koppel rejoined; "dramas are enacted in the soul, not in space. And the grandest tragedies are precisely those which go on in silence."

He was thinking as he spoke of his son's insubordination towards himself and that this warfare was in truth a fragment of the world's history, going on in the little apartment of the rue Saint André-des-Arts, between parents and child, an echo of a great historic race-rivalry, something incomparably higher and more forceful than the obtaining or the squandering of money—however much—by the quicksilver ring.

He rose. "If I have rightly understood you," he said, "the newspaper reports of the embarrassment of the quicksilver syndicate are false, and the fall in Almadens is made to order."

"I say again to you, this is a battle; and I am determined to win it. But, further, I say this, you have no right to speculate, and it is not your duty to fasten your punt to my ship."

The two men shook hands, and looked at each other with unusually expressive eyes; then Koppel went away, accompanied by Henneberg to the door of the apartment. On his way down stairs, the extraordinary stillness of the great, empty house seemed to be alive with ghostly voices, filling his ears with whispered talk, unintelligible, yet cruelly exciting.

Upon the whole, the mood of mind which he brought away from his visit, in spite of certain discords of anxiety, was one of encouragement. He no longer felt himself an unresisting sheep before the butcher's knives of the Bourse; but stood in an attitude of defence, or felt, at least, that some one else was fighting for him, that Henneberg defended him, a very Tamerlane against the Bajazets of the opposing faction. He needed, however, to repeat this to himself over and over again, for the situation went from bad to worse. The settlement at the middle of the month found the ruble-Russians at 65, and the Almadens at 660. Koppel had to make good a difference of 200,000 and some hundred odd francs. His entire gains had vanished, to the last penny; and he had to use 25,000 francs of his wife's property to pay the *coulissier*.

When he received his broker's memorandum, the sight of this total, at the first glance, was a fearful

blow, but he was still scarcely conscious of its actual significance. He lived in a sort of dream, into which reality could not force its way. He was still, in his mind the possessor of an income of 25,000 francs, and only for the moment obliged to make heavy disbursements. It was a tiresome incident, which in no way affected the final result. Only when he stood in the vault of the *Crédit Lyonnais*, and unlocked his box for the purpose of taking away all the loose bank-notes and the last of his *Almadens*, and a large package of his wife's securities as well, did there come a rent, for a fleeting moment, in the cloud of self-delusion that enveloped him, and the actual truth appeared before his sight. A voice within him cried aloud: "What are you doing! You are stealing from your wife and children! They suspect no evil; they regard you with confidence and affection; they feel safe in your care—while you, with diabolical wickedness, are working their ruin! Stop where you are! Save what can yet be saved!"

So clear these words rang in his mind, that he involuntarily turned, as if a person who had spoken them must be standing behind him. The papers shook in his hands, his knees seemed to give way under him, and, one after another, cold chills ran down his spine. He made an effort, however, to master his weakness; he wiped the sweat from his forehead, and hastened to get up-stairs and out into the air. Was this the strength of nerve on which he had prided himself? At the first alarm-shot to throw away his gun? How base the thought! Now was the time for courage. To sell when all was at its worst? No such triumph over him should the *Bourse* have. He was used to flurries. They could not worry him. He stood firm. Should he now let go, everything was lost, even his wife's property broken into, that sacred family treasure, that consecrated store. If he stood firm, without doubt all would be regained. For the decline could not last forever, could not continue into fathomless depths, it must be at an end now, and better days be close at

hand. Therefore, courage ! and keep up the struggle !

A few minutes later, with his valuable package under his arm, he entered the broker's office. He found the head of the house and Pfister with very sombre faces standing together in the reception room. They seemed to be engaged in conversation and suddenly broke off when Koppel appeared. They both came forward to meet him, greeted him with unusual cordiality ; the *coulissier*, after shaking hands with him repeatedly, took his package, passed it to the cashier, who was at his desk, and while the employee counted and examined the papers and prepared the receipt, the broker addressed encouraging words to his customer.

"The Bourse is wild," he said. "Ruble-Russians at 65 ! What can men be thinking of ! A man would be a fool to sell now."

"Yes, the Bourse is mad," Koppel regained, "but I have no idea of going mad myself."

"That is good," Pfister struck in.

"And how do you feel about Almadens ?" Koppel asked, in an easy tone.

"Well, I can hardly say. A man needs to look over the shoulders of the players. But only the initiated can do that."

"The Herr Doctor is one of the initiated," Pfister said, with a fawning smile.

"But the actual value of the stock ?" Koppel persisted, without noticing Pfister at all.

"That depends entirely upon the price of quicksilver, which is the point in dispute between the syndicate and its enemies." And after a pause, the *coulissier* added : "The word is now, to keep a sharp look-out."

"Yes, indeed ! A sharp look-out," asseverated Pfister.

"Of course, a sharp look-out," Koppel repeated ; but when he sought to make it clear to himself what these energetic words really meant, he could not help feeling that he had no idea.

Pfiester accompanied Koppel to his *fiacre*. "What do you suppose, Herr Doctor," he narrated to him confidentially, "the man was in a great fright, and pounced upon me."

"Why so?" Koppel asked, offended. "So far as I know, this is pay-day."

"Oh yes; but usually the accounts are adjusted before noon, and as you had not showed up at a few minutes before five—"

"But very often I have not come until afternoon."

"That was when you came to get money. Gentlemen are never impatient when they are to pay," replied Pfiester, with an affected laugh. "When, however, they are to be paid 200,000 francs, they become extremely particular and take it very ill if you are not there the moment the doors are opened."

Koppel said nothing, but his face grew more sombre.

"I told the gentleman my opinion very plainly," Pfiester went on: "'Herr Doctor Koppel,' I said, 'is not the kind of man to get all he can and run off with it and then keep out of sight when it comes his turn to pay up; you may be perfectly safe about the gentleman.' They are nothing but calculating machines, these fellows, they have no discernment of character, whatever."

"This suspicion of the broker's is insulting," Koppel began.

"How can a man like that insult you?" Pfiester interrupted eagerly, "he is accustomed to move in a circle ——"

"In future, I shall be there before twelve ——" Koppel resumed.

"Next time it will not be to pay money but to receive it, Herr Doctor," Pfiester said impressively. He grinned and rubbed his hands.

"And as soon as this business is concluded, he will have seen me for the last time," Koppel concluded.

"And serve him right," Pfiester declared. "When I bring him such a customer as you are, he ought to know what sort of man he is dealing with. But you

are not at all beholden to him, we have a choice. Every *coulissier* in Paris would think it an honour to operate with you."

The second half of the month was like the first. The situation did not improve. The Job's messengers from Russia followed each other in rapid succession. The reality was worse than the most malicious rumours of the Bourse had represented it. The harvest had failed completely; famine was a fact in most of the provinces, and, in the midst of all this disorder, came an official announcement that the interest on the ruble-Russians would be reduced from five per cent to four. As upon this news, a serious depreciation in paper rubles took place, Koppel's Russians dropped lower and lower. And also, Almadens showed no sign of lasting improvement. The journalistic attack upon the quicksilver-ring continued; at the same time, the voices raised in its defence became louder and more numerous. The quotations fluctuated violently, but on the whole, the downward tendency prevailed.

Koppel had now but one thought in his mind—the quotations. In the morning he was comparatively calm, though fatigued and depressed. About noon his excitement began. The Bourse was opened! The scalp-dance had begun! In the afternoon he could scarcely control his impatience. His body was in the school, but his soul was in the pillared temple of the Place de la Bourse. He conducted his class mechanically, with frequent noticeable pauses, of which he himself was unconscious, with slips of the tongue that made the boys titter; he failed to hear or to understand the answers made; and his inattentiveness became the talk of the whole school. Scarcely was it four o'clock before he snatched his hat and disappeared. He could no longer wait for the *Temps*. It was too late in arriving in his part of the city. He ran or drove across the Seine to get the report earlier. Although a subscriber to the *Côte*, he bought the numbers every day at the printing-office. Thus he got them almost as soon as they were out, shortly after

four, while at the house they would not have reached him until the last delivery, between eight and nine.

Soon, even this did not suffice to his impatience. It was insufferable to remain until after four without any news of the day's events at the Bourse. He had discovered that the first quotations were posted on a pillar in the great hall of the *Crédit Lyonnais*, between one and two o'clock. He made it a custom to rush over to the *Boulevard des Italiens*, before he went back to school. Dinner, in these days, was always too prolonged for him. He made impatient remarks as to the slowness with which the maid served or removed the dishes, until Frau Käthe and Elsa took hold themselves to hasten matters. He had his eyes forever on the clock, which hung between the two windows, and, usually left the desert untouched, to get away the sooner.

The figures which he obtained, at half past one in the *Crédit Lyonnais*, and at half past four in the printing-office of the *Côte*, busied him during the remaining hours of the day. His brain repeated them, turned them over and over, grouped them, subjected them to extraordinary treatment and maltreatment. His head became a kind of calculating machine, which from morning till night reeled off, as with the hum of machinery at work, rows of figures in various combinations. His imagination now worked only with these crude materials. First, he reckoned at every quotation how much he would have to pay at the settlement; how much he had now lost; how much the price must rise, for him to recover his own again; how much, for him to regain the profits he had had; how much, for him to reach the goal that he had fixed for himself.

But he did not limit himself to this. He made new ventures in his mind. He took, for a starting point, the quotations which the different securities, at various times, had had; he bought at a low price; sold, a few months later, when the price had doubled; then again bought, after the stock had dropped very low; and gained from each transaction the more because

he in no way restricted himself among the mass of securities which were the object of this game ; and thus became, in the turn of a hand, once, twice, four-fold, a millionaire : all, in his head.

From this series of dreams, he, with childish scrupulousness, banished all caprice ; the quotations with which he juggled must be exactly those which had occurred ; at the bi-monthly settlements, he set down to his own account the amounts which he found stated in his year-books of the Bourse ; nor did he allow himself the convenience of using round numbers, in his imaginative arithmetic ; he neglected no fraction. If reckoning in his head became fatiguing, he continued his additions and multiplications on paper ; and he became so deeply absorbed in these calculations that he would be extremely vexed if any one interrupted him. He was conscious of the insanity of this imaginary speculating, and angry when he caught himself at work in this way, but he could not let it alone ; it was an obsession, under which he came more and more as he abandoned himself to it, and he would not cease from this unnatural exertion of the mind until it had exhausted him into unconsciousness.

His life in these days was that of a sleep-walker in the daylight. He scarcely noticed what went on about him, being too deep sunken in his torturing, futile meditations. The quotations, however, followed their downward path inexorably, till they had reached the limit of his solvency. On the day when, at his noon visit to the *Crédit Lyonnais*, he saw chalked up as the opening quotations of the Bourse : Ruble-Russians, 61 ; Almadens, 640, he became dizzy, and was obliged to lean against the pillar on which the black-board hung. Now, all was over. With this, he owed 53,000 francs, and he had left, at most, not over 50,000. There was a vacancy in his head, and he could not collect his thoughts. He came back to school, but he could not remember by what streets. He looked at his class as at a far-off, floating picture in the clouds, and while he sat in his teacher's chair, and apparently

listened to boys translating from Horace, only one image was clear before him—a kind of blackboard, with glaring white figures on it: 61—640—53,000—50,000.

He did not wait for the stroke of four, but got off a few minutes earlier, across the Seine to the printing-office of the *Côte*, which was not out yet. He stood among the newsboys and the dealers, and there were also a few men, evidently, like himself, speculators, who, also, like himself, awaited over the counter their fate, life or death; when the papers came in, he pushed and crowded forward, to get one of the first; then, with the wet and ill-smelling paper in his hand, he, trembling, turned it over and over, till he found the place which concerned him; he was not conscious that impatient men behind him were crowding roughly past, he did not hear a surly voice that said: "You can read somewhere else; don't keep in the way." He only saw the final quotation of the day. Saved! There had been a slight rally in the prices. Not much; but enough to make his obligations no more than he could meet. From stupefied despair his mood changed to clear confidence. The wheel turns so quickly at the Bourse! The danger was past. In a few days he would be again a prosperous man.

And for days the Bourse played with him thus, as a cat plays with the mouse. At noon, ruin; at night, rescue; or, the other way. Twice daily, in the mask through which Fate looked at him, cheering smiles alternated with gloomy menace. The prices of his securities kept near the water-mark at which he lost footing; they grazed it, sank a little under it, went a little above it, and kept him all the time in the anguish of a man drowning. In these circumstances he was as sensitive to every political or business disturbance in both worlds, as an aching tooth is to the touch of cold. Every word in his morning's paper which seemed likely to disturb the temper of the Bourse cut him to the quick. An insurrection in Chili and a suspension of payment in Australia were alike his personal concern; a cabinet crisis in Madrid was as much a blow to

him as was a lack of rain in the Kapminenbezirk. There was nothing in the whole circuit of the globe that could happen without finding an echo in his anxious question : "What will the Bourse say about that?"

He lost appetite and sleep ; his eyes were more and more sunken ; his face grew pallid. His family must have been blind not to observe these changes. And even if his appearance had escaped notice, they could not but remark that he, the cheerful and talkative, the one who enjoyed talking and talked so well and easily, was absent-minded, silent, and often, the whole day long, did not willingly open his lips. Frau Käthe had asked over and over again ; "Hugo, what is the matter?" But as he had answered in a sullen way, "Nothing," and very soon after left the room, she did not venture to urge the question. Oscar came to the conviction that he was the cause of his father's depression. This occasioned the boy deep distress. More than once he was on the point of throwing himself into his father's arms, and saying ; "Father, forgive me ; I will not be stubborn any longer ; I have been an ungrateful son ; I am not worth all this anxiety which you feel on my account." But a mixture of timidity, false shame, and some lingering defiance, restrained him from acting upon the impulse.

Amid these mental tortures the end of the month came. The quotation for the Russians was 60, the lowest of the month. Almadens had worked up gradually from their lowest point and closed at 657 fr. 50. Koppel had, at the settlement, about 45,000 francs to pay, and there remained about 5,000 francs in his box after he had put together the securities which he had to give up to make his account even with the *commissier*. The handsome leather portfolio, once so full, now had fallen in, like leaky bellows. His drawer yawned empty and dismal to his sight. He gazed for a full minute into this black hole before he found the strength to close it. Thoughts of all kinds rushed through his brain. If Almadens had remained only a few sous lower, what would he then have done? He would have been insolvent. Would he have given

up what he possessed? Would he have said only: "I am bankrupt," and kept the 50,000 francs that he still would have had? Would it not be the best thing for him to do now, to put back this 45,000 francs that he had taken out, and now, at once, announce to the broker that he could do no more?

He was ashamed of the impulse and suppressed it with a great flood of self-contempt. Had he come to that? Was he a thief? Besides, would it not be as foolish as it was base? From mere good sense, he must remain an honest man. Here, as ever, honesty would be the best policy. So long as he continued to pay what was due, though he should pour out to the last drop all that he possessed, still he kept open to himself the possibility of winning back what he had lost. And accordingly, he took his risk.

The broker had had the insolence to distrust him the previous time; this time Koppel came at ten, between two lessons, shortening each fifteen minutes. Again Pfiester was there, and greeted him with exuberance. Koppel did not deny himself the pleasure of saying to the *coulissier*: "It is inconvenient for me to come at this hour, but since, last time, you took exception because I was not here until afternoon—"

The *coulissier* was profuse in his denials: How could Koppel have had such an idea? Pfiester had altogether misunderstood him, and had, as usual, done harm with his chatter. Whereat Pfiester shrugged his shoulders and ducked his head and made no reply. But when Koppel was going away, the *remisier* hastened after him, and said to him on the stairs: "You gave it to him well, Herr Doctor! He plays the innocent, but only yesterday he had me up again, and says to me: 'Is this Doctor Koppel so rich, that he can afford to lose a quarter of a million monthly? But I lighted him home! I said to him: 'Doctor Koppel is not one of your gamblers! He knows what he is doing; he has his plan, and he carries it out undismayed. The means for it he has, in unlimited abundance. The greatest people in Paris stand be-

hind him. And depend upon it, he will get the better of these tricksters; I said that to him, Herr Doctor."

Koppel had deteriorated so much both in character and in intelligence, that he believed what Pfister said. He drank in the other's words with pleasure. They seemed to him as the words of an oracle. The contemptible parasite did not suspect that fate through his base lips made a secret promise to himself! In the first three days that followed, things went better. The ruble-Russians dropped no further; and Almadens slowly began to rise. But then, there came a black day; the Russians fell to 58; and Koppel's castles in the air again were destroyed.

Now, fate had done its worst! Now, he was definitely ruined. Definitely? Who could be sure of that? There were yet five days to the 16th of July. Much might happen yet. In the second fortnight of June, also, he had, at one moment, seemed to be ruined and had come out safe. This might happen again. It must happen!

In his soul a childish superstition grew up. He devised signs which should have a certain significance. If the first fiacre that he met, on his way to school in the morning, was an "*Urbaine*," with yellow wheels, he would come out safe; if it was a black one, a "*Gauloise*," he was doomed. Other omens he constructed, according to the first letter of the leading article in his paper and the date of the coins that fell into his hands.

With fancies like these, he got through the day and the sleepless night. At one clear moment, the voice of his conscience cried out to him: "Since the 9th of July you are a swindler! You are playing with money not your own! Every penny that you now lose at the Bourse you take out of the pocket of the *coulissier*, to whom you cannot repay it!" But he found an answer which tranquillised him: "In making good my standing at the bi-monthly settlement," he said to himself, "I buy the right to use to the utmost all possibilities of the fortnight following. The

last moment of the last Bourse in the present half-month may make me safe again."

It did not make him safe. The compensation price of ruble-Russians was $58\frac{1}{4}$, that of Almadens, 665. He had 9,500 francs to pay; he had but 5,000. A sharp pang went through him, when he read the broker's note, that almost made him cry out. For the lack of a miserable sum like that—4,500 francs—must he acknowledge himself defeated, and throw down his weapons, after he had gallantly paid up, within six little weeks, 345,000 francs! Could he find help nowhere? By this time the money must be due for Elsa's pictures, which were to be delivered early in July. What if he went to the dealer, and asked for the payment? From this, however, he shrunk back, although he sought to persuade himself that it would be for the good of all, Elsa herself included. Then he thought of recalling the money that he had put into Madame Masmajour's business. But no; that also was not possible, for the contract required a long notice to be given. He could perhaps make over his claim to some other person? Yes. But he had still judgment enough left, in spite of the confusion of his thoughts, to see that such a transaction would require several days to be carried into effect, and that it would then be too late.

Even, at last, he thought he would go to Henneberg, and beg for help. What were a few thousand francs to this man, who juggled with millions? He would be obliged however, in that case, to confess that, on his last visit, he had told a bare and vulgar falsehood to his friend; for this confession he had not the courage. At the root of the whole thing, however, it was not from pride, that he did not go to Henneberg, it was not from common sense that he did not seek to render at once available the money that he had put into Madame Masmajour's business, not from a conscientious scruple that he did not lay hands upon his daughter's money at the picture-dealers; it was from mere pitiable, miserable feebleness. His capacity for making a decision was destroyed.

He had impulses yet, but his will was no longer able to carry them out.

That night, as he tossed sleepless and restless upon his bed, with bitter self-reproach, and with sudden shocks of terror as to the future, a thought came into his mind which made him almost tranquil, and, on the following morning, made it comparatively easy for him to go to the broker's.

It was but just nine o'clock when he appeared in the rue de Provence. No one was at the office except the janitor, and he had to await the arrival of the *coulissier*.

"Really, Herr Doctor," exclaimed the latter, when he appeared and discovered Koppel in the office, "you overdo your punctuality, to put me to shame. And you will have to wait now a little longer, for that idle cashier of mine has not yet come in. I beg a thousand pardons. I will myself make out your account." And he was about to do this, but Koppel detained him.

"Excuse me," he said, speaking, in spite of himself, with a smothered voice. "I have not come to-day to get my account, but to make a proposition to you. Or, to beg a favour of you. I am, this time, unfortunately, unable to pay the difference."

The *coulissier* stood still, and looked at Koppel in astonishment, while his face clouded and his brows contracted.

"A part of what I owe I will pay at once," Koppel went on, "and the rest you shall very soon receive to the last penny. But I beg you not to sell me out. If you throw my securities into the market now, you ruin me, and you lose your own money. If you hold me up, we have the certainty of seeing better prices. In this way, you help yourself and me."

"How much is due from you to-day?"

"9575 francs."

"And how much can you pay me?"

Koppel hesitated. "If you accept my proposition," he began, but the broker interrupted him.

"That has nothing to do with it. You say you can pay a part of what you owe. How much will it be?"

"I would make an effort," Koppel stammered, "I would get together a few thousand francs, if I had the certainty that I should not be slaughtered."

"Slaughtered!" exclaimed the broker wrathfully. "That is a fine thing to say! I think I am the one who is to be slaughtered. What security can you offer me?"

"My promise that I will meet my engagements," Koppel said. "I give you my signature——"

"Your signature!" broke in the *coulissier* roughly. "That is not worth a penny, according to what you yourself have just said. How can I, without security, hold you up? Your plan is to speculate at my risk. If your securities go up, you win; if they go down, I lose. I can see that this would be very agreeable for you. It is simply childish."

As Koppel remained silent, after a short pause the *coulissier* went on: "Without doubt, you must be sold out at once. It can only be done with extreme precaution, for the market is bad. And until I succeed in getting rid of the whole thing, I am exposed, alone, to all the danger. It is unheard-of! How can any one involve himself to such an extent when he is so weak? 800,000 francs of ruble-Russians! 1,000 Almadens! I supposed you had your millions."

He walked excitedly up and down the room, and the movement increased his anger. He now abandoned all consideration. "The quotations have been nearly the same for a week," he said. "Before that, they had improved. You have known, therefore, for a week, that you could not pay. And not a word has been heard from you all this time. Instead of coming and saying: 'I cannot pay the difference, you must realize,' you quietly go on at my risk. Does an honourable man do that? Is that decent? In your place I should sink into the ground with shame."

"I beg you not to talk in that way," Koppel said, but not with any firmness.

"So you take offence, do you?" cried the exasper-

ated broker, now in a furious passion. "You are a fine customer truly! You were very ready to take in your profits, but when you have to give out anything, then the word is: 'I cannot pay.' I ought to have known it before. Anything that comes to me through Pfister is always to be suspected. And I never once asked you for security, from your looks and your title. I can't understand how I could let myself be taken in like this. I should like to kick myself." He said this in a way that made it mean: "I should like to kick you."

Without saying a word Koppel rose and went out of the office. The *coulissier* followed him hastily, but Koppel had closed the door as he went and was already beyond recall.

It had then come to this! A trickster of the Bourse, a man of the breed that he had always despised, might cast in his face the vilest insults, and he dared not make answer, dared not say a word in defence of his honour! His honour! Had he then any such thing? No, he had none. He was a bankrupt swindler, who could not pay his losses; and if the *coulissier* had gone to extremities, if he had smitten him upon the cheek, there would have been no redress, for he had incurred the answer: "First, pay what you owe! Then you can talk!"

There was no excitement raging within him, no strong, wild impulse of resistance and retaliation; he no longer had the energy for it. It was rather a desolating consciousness of being humiliated, of being crushed to the ground. So might a man feel who had been run over by a railway train and, out of the first swoon, had awakened to consciousness: both your legs are gone; even if you do not die at once, you will always be a mutilated creature. Koppel seemed to himself to have shrivelled bodily. It appeared to him that he was a very small and feeble person, whom every passer-by might jostle or step on, at will; and who must accept it humbly and silently; this idea wrought in him such a feeling of despair and helplessness that he made his way along close to the wall, and

timidly bent his head before what seemed to him the threatening look in men's eyes as he passed.

In this condition, it was not possible to live longer. Of that he was certain. When, at brief moments, he looked forward into the future, he shuddered at the picture of poverty and distress that he saw there; but with a motion of the body he shook these thoughts out of his head. Why think of the future? For him there was no future. He had played at dice with Fate, and he had lost. What he had lost was his life.

This idea filled his mind, as he went toward the left bank, slowly, with the dragging steps of an old man, without thought as to the hour of the day, without caring that his class awaited him, and that his unexcused absence was an unexampled offence. In the rue Richelieu he passed a gunsmith's shop. Should he buy the revolver here. Perhaps in the next shop. He saw himself in his own room, at his writing-table. Against his right temple he felt a circular, ice-cold touch. A shot rung out. He lay upon the floor with a hole through his head. Then rushed in his mother, his Käthe, his Elsa; also, the ill-conducted Oscar. There was screaming, and wringing of hands, and despair! It would, perhaps, break their hearts. His old mother, at least, could never survive it. "How could you do this to us? And why did you do it?" they wailed, and flung themselves upon his dead body. Yes, why? And the shame would come to light. Then, they would learn, through the broker or through Pfister, sooner or later, that he had deceived, betrayed, cheated them, and was a miserable wretch, a gambler, a swindler, a cheat. And after that, perhaps, they would shun the thought of him, and would feel that the name they bore was a disgrace.

It was perhaps this one thing which hindered him from suicide; if he should take his life, all would be at once revealed; if he lived he could perhaps keep the shameful secret. And behind this first and lowest motive, which instinctive, foolish vanity flung out against the decision of his despair, rose other and better motives. He must not cause to his own family

this extreme of suffering. His life belonged to others and he must not rob them of it. He must work to expiate his offences. What lay before him was an intolerably barren existence of repentance and hopelessness; a lifelong treadmill; the pettiest cares, early and late; to be lost in the great crowd of the educated proletariat. But he could still be of some use to his family, until Elsa and Oscar had no further need of him and his Käthe could have a better home with her children than with her wretched husband. And he might perhaps hope, very slowly, by degrees, to pay off what he owed, or at least to lessen the sum, if he should patiently scrape and save to his life's end. This resolution raised him a little above himself. He despised himself somewhat less, and he began to have sympathy instead, a profound sympathy with this poor, unlucky fellow, who had dared to dream of a brighter destiny, and with whom all had gone wrong; and the intolerable tension of the last few hours gave way to an emotion which made his eyes overflow with tears, so that an occasional passer-by noticed it, and turned to look after him.

In the course of the day his mood changed diametrically from what it had been at first. Suicide had seemed to him then a last refuge, but now a violent, excited, extraordinary fear of death took possession of his mind. He had nothing left but his life. If he were to lose that, how could he make good the wrong he had done. He must, at once, obtain a life-insurance. How inconsiderate that he had not done this long before!

He went the same afternoon to three Life-Insurance Companies and obtained their tables, which he examined and compared until late into the night. He made his choice and the following day applied for a policy for 75,000 francs. Now, should he die, his Käthe at least, would receive her dowry and her inheritance. He wished to have it done in the turn of a hand, on the spot, at the moment he made his application. He was extremely disappointed on being told that the formalities necessary in the case would occupy several

days, especially since so considerable an amount of money was involved. A considerable amount! A few weeks before, he had been the possessor of five times as much, and had considered himself by no means, as yet, well off. He was also informed that he must undergo medical inspection. Upon this, a new alarm seized him. Was he sound in body? Had he, unknown to himself, some hidden malady which would cut him off from life-insurance? He expressed a wish that there should be no delay and was assured that the doctor would come to him on the following day. To this he objected, and said that he would prefer to go to the doctor's office.

And until the policy was paid for? It seemed to him that until then there was nothing to do. His imagination depicted to him all the dangers in the streets of a great city. The news of the day in his paper terrified him. How many accidents! How many crimes! Vehicles ran over men, there were explosions of gas, insane men in the street fell upon innocent people and shot or stabbed them fatally. In a hundred forms Death stalked through the streets and houses. He would have preferred to remain indoors, shut up in his own room, not even going out to the school, until he had the policy safe in his writing-table. But that could not be. He must go out as usual and incur all the dangers with which cruel chance forever besets the inhabitant of a great city. A way of escape presented itself. He took out a very heavy Accident-Insurance policy for a month. Now, for the first time, with this paper safe in his pocket, he breathed freely. Now a mad dog might bite him, or a runaway horse knock him down, or a falling beam hit him on the head. He would leave to his family 100,000 francs, much more than he was worth to them as he stood.

The matter of the accident policy occupied his attention for the time and helped him through the five days until he could receive his life-insurance policy and pay the first premium. When he held in his hand this document, he felt as if a part of the great burden

of anxiety which had oppressed him for weeks was taken away. He had, in some degree fulfilled his duty towards his family. In case of his death, they would not be left absolutely penniless. And now, a thick veil over the past ! A new life was to begin ; a life of humble but fruitful labour ; a life without buoyancy and outlook, but also without torturing excitement and vicissitudes ; all would be quiet and dull within him and around him, but he would again have peace, the often despised, the never fitly appreciated, the most precious thing that man can have.

Thus he laid out his future, but it was decreed that the reality should rudely awaken him from his dreams. In the two days that followed his visit to the *coulissier* came two letters, which made known to him that his ruble-Russians had been sold at 57 and 57¾, and his Almadens at 655 and 660 ; and that he owed 21,150 francs. These letters made no deep impression upon his mind. He felt them as dull shocks, which awakened the earlier pain, but were not in themselves noteworthy. His fate was decided. There was no further surprise possible. The Bourse had ceased to interest him. In the evening paper, he no longer sought the quotations. He did not even open the "*Côte*," for which his quarter's subscription had not yet expired. This was in a sense a relief and a comfort. But there was still the debt ! It was to be hoped, however, that the *coulissier* would have consideration and grant him reasonable respite. This respite must be of some length, it is true ; for it would be difficult for him henceforth to meet his current expenses, to pay the premium on his life-insurance policy, and have anything over towards the payment of this debt. However, he would do all that was possible.

As he did not reply at once to the two notifications he had received, there came a third letter, after two days, requiring him to pay his debt at once ; otherwise, legal proceedings would immediately be instituted against him. Koppel had come to no decision what steps to take when Pfister once more appeared. Koppel felt as if a venomous snake was before him.

This man seemed to be the personification of his own errors. He had driven him into the path of ruin. And he dared now to appear in the presence of his victim!

And he appeared with extreme composure. "We have been very unlucky," he began, playing with his *pince-nez*, "but that will happen in the best of families. You are not discouraged, I hope —"

"What!" exclaimed Koppel bitterly, "You seriously believe that I shall begin anew?"

"Why, certainly; or I am very much mistaken in you. You have been so brave and steadfast—it surprised me that you should let yourself be sold out —"

"I had no choice. Since I could no longer pay —"

Pfester smiled in a knowing way. "That's just where it was. In my opinion, you ought to have paid —"

"So? With what? I have nothing more."

"Oh, I know, you said that to the broker. But, of course, it is not to be taken literally."

"You think I am a cheat then?"

"Herr Doctor! Who is saying such a thing! What puts that into your head! I take you to be, simply, a clever and prudent man. I am not a child; I know the price of corn. You never would, at three settlements, have paid out something like 340,000 francs, if that had been all you had in the world. Nobody strips himself to the last penny. Every man keeps something back, so that he can operate again. Otherwise, how would he get his revenge? If you really had nothing more, excuse me, Herr Doctor, then—but I would better not express my opinion."

Koppel was infuriated. He wished to have done with the fellow, at once and forever.

"I beg your pardon," he said roughly. "I am busy. Tell me, in as few words as possible, what brings you here."

"You must know," Pfester answered. "I am responsible to the *coulissier* for half the loss. If you do

not pay, I must take out of my pocket on your account ten thousand francs and more. You can't be willing I should do that."

"You have made more than ten thousand francs out of me, in this past eighteen months——"

"Yes. Did you expect me to give back what I have honestly earned?"

"You never earned that money."

"That is your view of the matter. It is not the view generally accepted. But I will not discuss socialistic theories with you——"

"Quite right! I will discuss nothing with you any further. I shall pay the house what I owe; perhaps slowly, but to the last penny."

"Don't be self-willed, dear Doctor." Pfister became again shamelessly confidential, after the manner of an accomplice: "If one is unlucky in affairs, one compromises. As for the house—it is my house no longer. The man is a fool, and an insolent fellow. I have left him and go elsewhere now. What I think is, you ought to compromise with him. He will listen to a reasonable offer. I make you this proposition. I will settle with the *coulissier*, and you shall pay me—say, a third. Is it agreed? You will make a good thing of it, in this way. But this third I must have, money down."

"And if I pay you this 7000 francs, you will bring me a receipt from the house, in full, of all demands?"

"With the house, you have nothing more to do. That is my affair. The receipt you get from me."

Then Koppel understood. That Pfister was willing to pay one single penny for him, he did not for a moment believe. The man sought to plunder him to the last. He rose and said: "In my future relations to my creditor, I need no go-between. Thank you."

"But, Doctor," Pfister still urged, "you are evidently ruled by a mistaken sense of honour. The Bourse is neither a conventicle of elders nor an officers' club. Business is business. Why should you continue to drag round with you a debt of 21,000 francs, when you can compromise, and pay a third—"



or perhaps, even less? Sacrifice the few thousand francs. They must be of very little consequence to you, since you were willing to sacrifice 350,000. And then, with fresh courage, we will work for our revenge!"

"Will you leave me alone," Koppel said, at last, straight out. "I have nothing more to say to you."

"Now is that fair?" rejoined the *remisier* impudently. "You talk big, and leave me in the mud. You laugh now in your sleeve. You have what you need. How can I go back to a broker if I don't pay my debt? And what should I do for a living if I were excluded from the Bourse?"

"Break stones!"

"Yes, and have a school-teacher come along and take away from me what I have earned at doing it."

"Get out of this!" Koppel shouted in a fury, and flung open the door of the room where they had been talking, which was adjacent to the class-room.

Pfiester would have been glad to attack Koppel, but as the latter, with swollen veins upon his forehead and fiery eyes, was evidently quite ready for a fight, the *remisier* only shrugged his shoulders, muttered some insulting words and rapidly departed.

Koppel had not yet recovered from the excitement of this base proposition, when on reaching home a letter was given him, addressed in an unfamiliar handwriting, whose substance was that the writer desired to see Koppel on a matter of vital importance to the latter, and begged him to call at the writer's office within two days.

The note was signed "Emmery," and Koppel had no difficulty in conjecturing that it referred to his debt to the broker. Everything, however, naturally connected itself in Koppel's mind with this matter, and everything vague and unknown seemed to him ominous. He replied, however, without delay, saying that he had not the advantage of knowing his correspondent, had no idea what there was to be told to him, and had no reason for going to see the writer. But if the latter wished to take the trouble of coming to see

him, he would be found at such and such hours, giving the address of the school.

The next day, in the afternoon, as he returned from school, Frau Käthe came out into the anteroom to meet him, and whispered that a gentleman was waiting to see him. Koppel changed colour, he could not have told why; and it appeared to him that there was something strange in his wife's look, an unusual sadness and a reproach. But almost everyone impressed him thus, at that time, and he thought no more of it.

"My name is Emmery," the stranger said, rising as Koppel entered.

"Ah!" Koppel said, and no more; then, with a gesture bade the visitor follow him into his study, where, after closing the door, he said coldly:

"I desired you to come to see me at the school."

"I preferred to come to your residence," the other said, without seeming at all abashed at the coolness with which he was received. "Here we can talk more at our ease." As Koppel remained silent, and looked at him inquiringly, he went on: "You doubtless understand that I come about the affair of Monsieur Silbert." This was the *coulissier*. "He has placed the matter in my hands. Before I institute a suit against you, I would like to ask, in your own interest, whether we cannot come to an agreement ourselves. I await your proposition in the matter."

"I shall pay the entire sum to Monsieur Silbert, but he must give me time."

"That is too indefinite. Will you give us a note?"

"My note would have no more value than my promise. And I fear that I cannot bind myself to any fixed dates. I do not yet know with certainty what my income will be, or how much I shall be able to employ annually for the extinction of this debt."

"That looks very much like evasion—"

"Sir!"

"Pardon me. Compose yourself. I am not here to waste your time, or my own, but to come to some result. You have said to Monsieur Silbert that you would pay part of what is due."

"Yes. But since that time I have used the money in paying for a life-insurance policy."

"How could you do that? The money was not yours."

"No. It was my wife's, and I used it for her benefit."

"But a man must first pay his debts."

"I do not understand that you are here to lecture me on morals."

"I am sorry that you take this tone. I do not think you clearly understand what your situation is. If we are convinced that we have to deal with an ill-disposed debtor, we shall proceed against you inexorably. You will count upon no consideration whatever from us. You may be perfectly certain that we shall take your furniture and trustee your salary. We shall leave you nothing but your beds, and the clothes that you have on. Consider also, the injury that this will do you. It will scarcely be an advantage to you in the school, when it is understood that you have played beyond your means at the Bourse."

Koppel was overwhelmed, every word which this man said so quietly and calmly smote him like a blow. "I assure you," he said, "I have nothing, nothing at all! There is left possibly 2,000 francs, and that is not my money, but my wife's."

"Your wife's! Your wife's! That is a form of speech. You will have to offer more than that, otherwise we must resort to legal measures; 2,000 francs we should get in any case, for your furniture is worth that."

"But I have no more," Koppel cried despairingly.

Emmery smiled incredulously. "For the moment you perhaps have no more at your command. But you have friends. You have, as you say, a policy of life-insurance. Give us that in pledge. Make an effort. Show your good will."

Koppel remained silent, and did not lift his eyes from the floor.

"Monsieur Silbert," Emmery continued, "has computed, from his books, that you must still have a

large sum left from your winnings which he has paid you, unless you have been speculating through other houses, and have had losses about which he knows nothing."

Koppel started up. "That is false;" he said, "in his own books he can see that I have paid him 70,000 francs more than I have ever received. If he says otherwise, he lies."

"You must not use violent language; I will not listen to it. I ask once more; will you make us a reasonable offer?"

"I have nothing further to say."

Emmery rose. "Then I am sorry that I must declare war. And again I repeat, you must expect no consideration."

Koppel bent his head silently. The visitor put his hat on, and passed through the salon without removing it.

The threat shocked Koppel indescribably. He remained as if crushed, sitting at his writing-table, his head buried in his hands. His most immediate terror was that his wife might come in, and ask him what the man had wanted. He was so shattered that he would not have been able to evade or conceal. This cup, however, passed from him—to his relief and a little to his surprise, Frau Käthe left him undisturbed. He made an effort to represent to himself the results of Emmery's visit. He saw the officer of justice, *l'homme noir*, as he is called in Paris, come into the apartment and carry everything away; he saw his salary trustee; he saw Wolzen, giving him notice, since the head of a school could no longer employ a bankrupt gambler, a prosecuted debtor; and his family, from whom nothing could be concealed, as soon as the apartment had been made empty; and the report of the court, which would bring his name into all the papers. This was to be unmasked in the presence of his wife and children, to be disgraced before the world, to be made a beggar.

This must be prevented, even at the cost of a new crime. Two days before, he had received the money

for Elsa's pictures, and had it in his care. So much the worse. He must lay hands upon this 10,000 francs. Also the money loaned to Madame Masmajour, the last crumb of his wife's property, he must call in. It mattered not. He must go on to the bitter end. But this theft of what belonged to his daughter seemed to him such a monstrous thing that he would wait and see if the *coufissier* really was intending to carry out his threat.

He had not long to wait. On the second day there came a summons from the Tribunal of Commerce "for him to appear and receive sentence to pay to Monsieur Silbert the sum of 21,150 francs, with current interest and costs." And so the peril took definite shape. It stood before the door. Before he did what seemed to him the last thing, namely purloining his daughter's money, he thought it worth while to consult a lawyer. To his neighbour in the house he would not go. To him, he would not reveal his situation. He therefore made choice of the first name he found in the address-book. But he did not see this gentleman, as an office-boy on guard, after one glance at the document Koppel brought, informed him that he must go to a solicitor of the Tribunal of Commerce, and indicated to him the office of one.

Here, also, he did not reach the solicitor himself, but was referred to an assistant, a scornful young man, who seemed to have been hardened by all the fires of Paris life. This individual carelessly looked over the summons, desired an account of the affair from Koppel, but interrupted him almost at the first sentence with the exclamation: "What is your opponent thinking about! This is a gambling debt not recognized by the courts, Article 1965 of the Civil Code."

As Koppel gazed at him astonished and perplexed, the young man went on: "Of course your dealings have been on time only, with Monsieur Silbert?"

"Certainly."

"I mean to say, you have only risked your money in the rise or fall of stocks, and never really taken the securities up?"

Koppel was obliged to confess that he had in small blocks, by degrees, taken up 300 Almadens. "And I paid for them with the profits," he hastened to add, but the young man interrupted him.

"That makes no difference. As long as you have taken up anything, the plea of a gambling debt offers no full security. It is a two-edged sword. The judge will accept this plea only when it is entirely valid. Let us try to find some other way out. In what securities have you gambled?"

"In Almadens and ruble-Russians."

"In these only?"

"The debt depends on these only."

"Were these securities officially dealt in?"

"Certainly."

"Oh, my dear sir, now we have the privilege of the *agents de change*, article 76 of the Commercial Code."

"Which is—"

"Which is that the *coulissier* has no right to handle these securities; and that Monsieur Silbert has no right to ask a single *sou* from you. You can go home in peace. Things will be settled in five minutes before the court. The privilege of the *agents de change* is unconditional and admits of no response."

"This law is very hard upon the *coulissier*, and I should be sorry—"

"It is very advantageous for the customer. The *coulissier* must look out for himself. He acts at his own risk."

"I should not be willing to be unjust. I am perfectly ready to pay Monsieur Silbert what I owe him."

"But you don't owe him anything,—at least, according to the law."

"According to my conscience—"

"Your conscience, eh?" the young man said, with a sarcastic smile. "That's altogether superfluous in the Tribunal of Commerce. You will be glad to know that you have no use for it there."

Koppel felt himself insulted. He resented the undisguised contempt of this youthful cynic, whose

mien said plainly enough: "It's understood that you're a swindler who wants to elude his creditor; but you have the law on your side. To try to appear as if you were an honest man is both unnecessary and childish, and it won't go down with me."

As if replying to these unspoken words, Koppel said: "All I want is that Monsieur Silbert shall not be able to get a judgment against me and send an officer into my house. Without any compulsion I shall, in time, pay him in full. Since the end of May I have now paid him about 350,000 francs."

"You ought not to have done that," the young man remarked calmly as he selected a cigarette and lighted it. "If a man wins at the Bourse—which, all the same, he is very likely not to do—he is wise to keep the money, and not let it go again. Don't waste any thought on this matter. It was probably a mock-sale, anyway, and this Monsieur Silbert got all the profits."

"I don't think so."

"As you please. An outsider like yourself is always cheated when he ventures into that den of thieves. If you feel desirous to make Monsieur Silbert a present of 20,000 francs, you can do it. It is not my affair."

The young man required a large retaining fee, and sent Koppel away with repeated assurance that he positively had not the slightest cause for anxiety, and that his opponent had only undertaken this absolutely hopeless prosecution for the purpose of extorting money.

Procedures in the Tribunal of Commerce are very simple and rapid. Before the week had ended, judgment had been given. The plaintiff was non-suited, with payment of costs on account of infringement of the privileges of the *agents de change*. The terrific ghost of prosecution and distraint was laid. The *con-lissier* had no further claim, and it was declared that Koppel owed him nothing. When this decision of the court was announced, Koppel felt, certainly, the relief which an escape from overwhelming peril always causes, but he could not silence a voice within him

which cried to him incessantly: "Your creditor, and your own counsel, and the judge who decided in your favour, all of them are convinced that you are a common swindler, who has been enabled, through a crevice in the law, to escape merited punishment."

Amid the alternations of despair, anxiety, and extreme depression, amid these struggles of self-contempt and good resolutions, July came to an end and August began. Wolzen's Institute and Oscar's gymnasium were closed. Of a journey, either into Germany or in any other direction, Koppel, for eight weeks, had said not a word. Evidently there were to be no more summer trips. He no longer had the means. He must again seek, as before, to find profitable occupation for the holidays, in preliminary and other forms of private instruction. It was fortunate, amid the general misfortune, that the disaster had occurred before he had given notice to Wolzen, as he was intending to do at the beginning of June. What if the crash had not come until after he had resigned his place? He would then, within a year, have been in the street! What irony of fate! He must now, in all humility, recognize it as an undeserved favour of destiny, that there was still left to him the occupation, to be set free from which had seemed to him the most precious change in his existence, the attractive, delightful goal of his efforts. He could but bow his head and endure this mockery also, with all the other humiliations.

But what must his own family think of it, that he never again had recurred to those plans of travel which he had so formally announced to them? It was most considerate of them that they never had made it hard to him by any question or reminder. But some explanation he must offer to them. What should it be? The true one? He had not the moral courage for that. To go to his wife, to say to her: "I have ruined you, the children, all of us!"—no; impossible! Yet something must be thought of, must be devised; for a simulation of prosperity could not be kept up. Earlier or later, the truth would come out; it would at

least be better that it should come later, when he had in some degree regained his equanimity and the old patience and strength for his routine of work; also, it must come by degrees, with slow, careful preparation, that his poor Käthe might not be crushed under the weight of a sudden disclosure.

Yes, poor Käthe! She had, without that, already trouble enough! For he now began—after the long weeks in which men and things had been like shadows to him—to be capable of observing what was around him, and he saw how painfully introspective she had become, how sad was her look, what furrows had appeared in her forehead and around her mouth. And he knew the cause of this. Oscar had fallen sadly into the rear at school. Was it from idleness? Was it sheer incapacity? He who for years had been a pattern pupil, the pride of the school as well as his parents, had this year, neither in the general examinations nor even in those in his own class, received even the smallest "*accessit*." This must be a cause of great grief to the mother. Koppel knew well how greatly she took to heart the up and downs of the boy's school-life, and what importance she attached to them. But he could not believe that Oscar's abilities, of which he himself had a great opinion, could be permanently withered and shrivelled up. The boy was disabled temporarily by the indecision as to his future. And here an opportunity presented itself to Koppel for giving a credible explanation for his change of plans. He would say to Oscar that he had forgiven him his insubordination, that he had relinquished the design of sending him, against his will, into Germany, and that now he should expect from him much greater industry and better results than had characterized his school-work in the past year. The boy had not earned any holiday trip, and must regard it as a duty, to which he was in honour bound, to spend the summer months in preparation for a brilliant Baccalaureate examination, instead of idly bicycling at the seashore. To his wife he would then explain that it would be cruel to leave the boy *alone* in Paris, and themselves go to the sea; and that

on this account they must all deny themselves the pleasure of the journey. So the difficulty of the moment would be gotten over, a year's respite would be gained, and, for the future, a feeble mortal had no need to care.

He turned these thoughts over and over in his mind while he went hither and thither, making efforts to regain the holiday classes and private lessons which, a year before, he had so loftily given up. Since the last day of July, he had proposed to himself every day, morning, noon, night, to have the inevitable talk with his wife; but, each time, he shrunk back from doing it; and on the third of August he still had said not a word. On this day, when he came home at night from his disagreeable and not very successful search for pupils, something very surprising met his sight. In the parlour Elsa sat on a low bench at her mother's feet, her head buried in Frau Käthe's lap; her mother was talking with her in a very low tone and very earnestly. As Koppel came in, they both started, and he saw that their faces were agitated and tearful.

He stood a moment, as if spell-bound, at the door of the room, and then exclaimed hastily: "What's this?"

Elsa looked at him for a moment, her eyes full of tears; then crying, "I cannot!" ran out of the room.

"What does this mean?" Koppel repeated, and came toward his wife.

She turned her head away, and looked out of the window.

"Käthe, for God's sake, don't torture me, what is the matter?" he exclaimed, and his voice was agitated.

Then she turned slowly round and said in a dull voice: "Brünne-Tillig has been here and proposed for Elsa."

Koppel was thunderstruck. The ground seemed to yawn at his feet, and a frightful faintness came over him. With this, his carefully framed deceit must be shattered. Now he must confess that he no longer had "the officer's guaranty."

"That is—that—that is very good—and, what—does Elsa say?"

Frau Käthe was silent for a minute; then she replied: "Elsa has refused him."

Koppel drew a long breath. This way came rescue, then! But he felt how monstrous was the selfishness which made him rejoice in his own heart that his daughter had refused a suitor who doubtless would have made her happy; and he despised himself more than ever. But he sought to conceal what went on within him, and said, with an air of deep sympathy:

"That is a pity. Has the child positively decided?"

Instead of answering, Frau Käthe shrugged her shoulders.

"But why does she refuse? She seemed to like him."

"Ask yourself," Frau Käthe said, in a low voice.

He sat down and stared at vacancy. Then he rose, walked about the room for awhile, and finally stopped before his wife: "There is something here," he said, "which I do not understand. I don't see why Elsa said no, at once; and, still less, why, just now, she was sobbing in your arms. It seems to me you are concealing something from me."

"It would only be to follow the example you have set us," Frau Käthe replied.

Koppel started. "What do you mean by that?" he said.

"Hugo," she answered, with great sadness in her voice, and lifted her pathetic brown eyes reproachfully to his, "do you think that we are blind? You neither talk, nor eat, nor sleep; you are absent-minded, you look distressed and ill; and you don't tell us what it is that burdens you. Is this right? Are we strangers? Do we belong to each other or do we not?"

He looked into her tear-wet eyes and her agitated face, he marked the intense feeling in her voice, and a full consciousness of what he had done came over him as never before. The little arts of concealment, denial, evasion, vanished as if scourged away, and,

like a flood breaking through all barriers came, almost unconsciously and uncontrollably, from his lips the words: "Käthe, you are right. I am a wretch. My conduct towards you has been base. I have lost every penny that was yours, and I have not had the courage to tell you." And he himself fell on his knees beside her, hiding his face against her breast, as Elsa had done a few moments before. And Frau Käthe held him close to her heart—that throbbing heart of wife and mother, whose destiny it was to take into itself every grief of those who were her own; and while with very gentle hand she smoothed his hair, she said:

"Poor Hugo, I knew all this before."

He lifted his head hastily. What! he said, "you knew it? How could you know it?"

"The man who came here ten days ago to harass you gave me to understand very nearly how things stood. He spoke of your transactions at the Bourse, and he questioned me as to our means. And then a paper, you know, came from the Tribunal. If you had not been so worried, you would have noticed that it was only folded together, and that any one could read it."

"And you said not a word, though you knew it all the time?"

"It was for you to speak of it first."

"And you have not a word of reproach for me now?"

"You have suffered enough without that! Indeed, I saw it."

"Ah, Käthe, Käthe!" was all that he could sob out.

"You have made me suffer bitterly," she went on, speaking softly, "not because of the loss, for we shall get over that, with God's help, but because of your lack of confidence in me. How could you find it in your heart to keep all this a secret? Have I ever concealed anything from you? Could I do it? Until now, you could not have done it. Hugo, you have ceased to love me. That is what hurts, you see."

He rose to his feet, then sat down by her side and drew her into his arms, covering her with caresses. And he sought to explain that it was not through any lack of love, but instigated by love, that he had done these wrong and foolish things, to spare her anxiety at the moment, and, in the end, to lay a completed fortune at her feet.

"But have I not been content with what we had? You might have asked my advice."

"If I had done that," he said, "I should be happy, and not miserable, to-day!"

Briefly he told her the entire truth to the very last word, with a kind of painful delight; every sentence of the avowal relieved his heart, and loosened the fetters from his soul. The wonderful healing virtue of confession penetrated to the innermost fibres of his being, and imbued him with new life.

"Can you forgive me?" he said, when she had heard all.

"Now, I can," she said softly.

"Perhaps you do not consider the full extent of my offence. Your money—the children's inheritance—"

"Let that go," she interrupted him tenderly; "for twenty years you have worked for us, and supported us honestly; I have no reproaches to make you."

He remained silent, lest he should say too much. Suddenly he asked a question: "Does Elsa know?"

Frau Käthe bent her head in assent, and brushed away the tears which again came to her eyes.

"Was it for this reason—"

Again she bent her head.

"Poor child!" he groaned; "and this, too! The happiness of her life wrecked!"

He covered his face with his hands. And the poor mother was too sorely affected herself to be able to say a word.

After he had composed himself a little, he asked to know the whole story, and Frau Käthe told him, as she had heard it from Elsa.

Brünne-Tillig had just been there. He had come early in the afternoon, and had begged Frau Käthe's

permission to speak with Elsa alone. The mother accordingly had withdrawn and left them together. He began by saying to Elsa that, as he understood they were soon to leave Paris and he himself was soon to go, on leave of absence, and very probably would not return, he felt that he must now speak. He had loved her, he said, even since the first time he saw her, and the year's acquaintance had shown him that she was as good and clever as she was beautiful and attractive; he was sure he could never have a moment's happiness without her, and he begged her to become his wife. She was extremely overcome; and at first, could not reply. He believed this was only a girl's shyness and embarrassment, and went on to tell her what he was in a position to offer her. He had no money he said, beyond his officer's pay. She would probably have to exchange her splendid Paris for some little German country town. But he should worship her, and he should make it the object of his life to compensate her for the sacrifice. She had stopped him here, that she might not lose what strength was left to her, and had told him that it was impossible. He could not believe he had heard aright, and asked her if she had indeed said "no." And she was obliged to repeat the "no," although it seemed as if she would die. He questioned if she loved some one else; upon which she had cried out: "How could you think it?" He asked if she had not cared for him a little? Whereat she would not answer, and began to shiver. He was anxious to understand the matter, he begged, implored; but she was too proud to let him know that "the officer's security" of 40,000 marks could not be furnished by her parents, and only implored him to say no more. No reason could be given; but, it was impossible for her to marry him. Upon this, he desired to see Frau Käthe—though much against Elsa's wish—and told her frankly what distress Elsa's refusal had caused him, begging the mother to tell him whether really there was no hope. Frau Käthe could only say that the girl herself must decide such a question, and that no compulsion would be exercised over her by

any one. With this answer, Brünne-Tillig went silently away. And Elsa dropped upon the floor at her mother's side, and whispered : " Mother, my life goes with him."

" What I have to do," Koppel said, when Frau Käthe, between her sobs, had told it all, " is to go to Brünne-Tillig and tell him exactly the truth. He ought to know that Elsa loves him, and that she only cannot marry him because she has no dowry."

" Why should you humiliate her to no avail?"

" It is not a humiliation to her, and if Brünne-Tillig loves her truly, he will wait till he can marry her."

" That is Elsa's hope, too," Frau Käthe said eagerly. " She could perhaps, herself, be able to earn this money."

" Ten thousand francs she has already."

" But that does not belong to her."

" What do you mean?"

" You must pay that to your creditor."

" Never!" Koppel said. " He has no claim on me, you know."

" Oh yes! he has. We are not dishonest people. You owe the money and it must be paid. But we will talk about this later. What I say now is that perhaps Elsa would be able to earn her 75,000 francs. She feels quite sure she could do it before so very long a time if she is industrious and has good luck as before."

" Certainly, then, I will see Brünne-Tillig."

" It seemed to me we ought to say this to him. But Elsa will not let you do it. She says: ' No. He must be told nothing; he must not feel himself bound; if he forgets me, it is not the love I have dreamed of, and I will see then how I can bear it; but if he is what I think, he will be true to me until the time comes when I can say to him that I am ready.' "

" That is a frightfully dangerous experiment."

" Poor child! she knows that it is."

Both were silent, lost in painful thoughts. Koppel was the first to speak.

" What am I now?" he said. " A most unhappy

wreck. I meant well for you all, but I have failed ; and now I have to lament over a life forever ruined."

"A humble life is not a ruined one," Frau Käthe rejoined. "I am always contented when we are together. You would have remained so, too, if Henneberg had not made you dissatisfied. We cannot all be millionaires. Nor do we need to be. Noise and show are not happiness. A quiet life and to do one's duty—"

"But I have not done my duty—" he interrupted her.

"You had been doing it for years, and you will do it once more," Frau Käthe said, with her hand clinging to his. "You meant well for us ; but you did not take the right way. Why seek to go higher ? As for me, I love dearly to be content with what I have. A ruined life, you say ? Oh, no ; no life is ruined which gives love and receives love."

"I have received love, my Käthe ; far more than I deserve ; far, far more than I deserve," Koppel said, and snatched her again into his arms, holding her close, as if some one were going to tear her from him.

CHAPTER XVII.

ATROPOS.

THE Baroness Agostini went to her château in Brittany, as usual, immediately after the Grand Prix, and Henneberg accompanied her. But to his extreme vexation he could not long remain, the situation of the quicksilver-ring urgently recalling him to Paris. The newspapers spoke of mysterious journeys which he made in August and September. He was seen in London, in New York, and in Chicago, then vanished as unexpectedly as he had appeared. The Bourse followed his movements with feverish attention and gave expression in violent fluctuations of Almaden and other quicksilver stocks to the conjectured meanings of these journeys.

Near the end of September, Baron Agostini received a telegram from Henneberg desiring him, with the greatest urgency, "to come immediately to Paris for a meeting of the syndicate which absolutely required his presence and could not possibly be postponed." The old baron, whose personal will had been, during the last two years, completely destroyed, and who obeyed Henneberg at a nod, at once ordered preparation to be made for the journey. The baroness proposed to accompany him, but he was unwilling to have her abridge by three weeks her stay in the country. He knew that she especially enjoyed the sunny, dreamy early autumn of Brittany, with its warm colouring on wood and heath, the melancholy music of its winds, and that slight fragrance of the withered foliage and dried aftermath, which reminds one of a faint trace of incense; and that she never willingly abandoned her beloved wilderness until howling storms and pelting rain rendered it nearly uninhabitable. He would see what "the great planner," as with smiling, condescending admiration, he called Henneberg, wanted of him so soon again; and he would then return. The journey in the luxurious parlour-car was not fatiguing.

In the library of his vast, silent house, Henneberg, one morning, had gathered his associates. Besides Agostini, there were Count Beira, General Zagal, Kohn, the president of one of the great mining companies, and two other financiers belonging to the ring. The library had been selected, because it could be most securely isolated from the rest of the house. When the rooms on each side were locked, there was no cause for anxiety about being overheard by the servants. Excessive caution was necessary in this respect, for the matter to be discussed was extremely important.

Henneberg's calculations had proved to be in fault at one point. It had been planned that the syndicate with its own means, should pay for one year's output from the mines, and it was the expectation that, for the second year's purchase, the sale of the quicksilver in the hands of the syndicate would amply provide the

means. But it came about that this sale was not made. The consumers refused to pay the syndicate's price, and preferred to stop work, or to carry it on in extremely reduced proportions. But at the mines, on the other hand, work was urged to the utmost ; the output was greatly increased and far more quicksilver was delivered than had been expected. The syndicate, however, was obliged to accept it all, at the price agreed upon, for otherwise the companies were at liberty to throw it upon the market at their own price, whereby the syndicate's stock would become entirely unsalable.

During the first year the syndicate had had no trouble in paying for all the quicksilver which the mines delivered to it. In the second year it became necessary to pledge this stock of metal to obtain means to pay for further deliveries. Six months earlier there would have been trouble if the fifty million francs which the "shorts" in Almaden were forced to pay, had not tided over the difficulty. Now, however, there was no resource of any kind. The quicksilver continued to pour in, in an ever-increasing mass, inexhaustible, alarming, overwhelming ; and there was scarcely any perceptible out-flow.

Although the utmost ingenuity was exerted to keep secret the amount of the metal in hand, the dealers and the great speculators conjectured the plethora. It became almost impossible to raise money on it any longer. The banks and the moneyed men would lend but very little, and required large interest. If terms like these were accepted, then the lenders became very suspicious, and conjectured that the syndicate was *in extremis*. If they were not accepted, then, no loan could be obtained. The enemies of the syndicate meanwhile were far from idle. They had their emissaries everywhere, and seemed to have a presentiment of the crisis, perhaps even more than a presentiment. The attacks of the press became more and more violent and well-directed. To fight them off required great expenditure of money which could ill be afforded. The influence of a large operator, heavily short, set par-

liament and the government on the track. It was perhaps at this man's instigation that a London bank called in for October its loan on a very large mass of metal, and could not be persuaded to extend the time. Henneberg had endeavoured to gain over American multimillionaires for the syndicate. For this purpose he had gone to America. But unacceptable conditions had been insisted upon by the Americans. They insisted on having the entire control of the syndicate; they would take the metal in hand at half the price which the syndicate itself had paid for it; in short, they proposed to slaughter their European colleagues. If one wished to cut his throat, one could do it without applying to the Yankees.

"What a shameful race of adventurers!" Count Beira said, with righteous indignation.

"Not the slightest fellow-feeling towards their colleagues!" whispered Kohn to him, with a scarcely perceptible wink.

"The situation will become extremely critical," Henneberg went on, "if at least we cannot procure, within the next two weeks, the 8,000,000 francs due in London."

"And the French-Oriental Bank?" one of the financiers asked.

Baron Agostini looked up, and answered with an impatience that ill concealed his anxiety: "What more do you want of us? Our entire stock, all our deposits, are already sunk. We have nothing in our vaults but quicksilver-warrants and Almaden certificates of stock. We cannot discount a note for our oldest customers. If our depositors should require their money any day, we should have to turn our pockets inside out. Instead of crowding us any further you ought to make things easier for us. That is what I expect will be done to-day."

"Are we so bad off as that?" sighed the second financier, with discouraged aspect.

"My dear General, I depend upon you," Henneberg said, turning towards General Zagal.

"Upon me?" hissed the little fat man, and his face

grew more coppery than ever. "I have put into this enterprise 65,000,000 francs so far. Shall I sell my Orders and the scabbard of my sword? You have got all my money."

"You are amalgamated," Kohn whispered to him.

"What do you mean?" Zagal rejoined, savagely.

"Quicksilver has the property of taking up gold. We call it amalgamating," Kohn said, impressively.

"I admire your cheerful mood, Monsieur Kohn," Henneberg said. "You do not seem to observe that is a question of safety or ruin, neither more nor less. It is true you are only in for 3,000,000. The rest of us have over 300,000,000 at stake. It is, therefore, of some importance to us whether we win or lose."

"Don't be excited, my dear baron," Kohn rejoined tranquilly; "you have to be cool, to win in games like these."

Henneberg gave him a savage look, which, however, did not disturb him in the least, and went on: "The situation demands effort and sacrifice from each one of us. I have worked out a plan which will, without any doubt, bring us out safe. We must have fresh capital; but this we cannot get from individuals, for we should have to allow them to look into our affairs; upon which they would at once decide that it was more profitable for them, at present, to work against us, than with us."

A faint groan came from one of the financiers.

"But what individuals will not give us we can obtain from a great number. We must form a stock-company. We are not obliged to show our hands to the public. There must be a great operation. We require six hundred million francs. Whether obtained from shares only, or whether in part from bonds, I leave an open question, for the present. Thus we obtain the means to hold out for at least two years longer; and, at the worst, the consumers cannot continue to sulk as long as that."

Baron Agostini nodded approvingly, and Kohn's face became suddenly very serious.

"A very good idea," he said; "but what if the

public don't bite? The newspapers, and all sorts of individual efforts, will scare them off."

"I think, to begin, we should not try here," rejoined Henneberg; "we should turn to the Belgian, English, and South-German money-markets. I have everything in readiness to open the campaign through the newspapers in these countries, as soon as the signal is given."

"That would be all very well," Count Beira remarked, "but if we turn the syndicate into a joint-stock company, our profits go to the stockholders; and all our anxieties and efforts for the last two years have been for their benefit."

A fleeting smile of commiseration crossed Henneberg's face. "Don't suppose I am a child, my dear Count. We reserve for ourselves founders' shares. We guarantee the stockholders a dividend of, say five per cent; what is earned beyond that, we divide—half to the shares, and half to the founders' shares."

"That would do very well," said Count Beira, pacified.

Kohn was still very thoughtful. "You are quite right," he remarked; "we must appeal to the great public; but a small amount is not what we need, and whether we can secure six hundred millions seems to me very doubtful."

"You may suppose that I have taken that into consideration," Henneberg said, somewhat superciliously; "something we are sure to get from the everyday man; in this way we get over the most urgent necessity; and after this we are not obliged to have ready money. We can pay for the further output of the mines in stock. The mines will consent, we may hope, for they have the same interest with ourselves in keeping up the syndicate."

All eyes were turned toward the president of the mining company, who obstinately perused a paper which lay before him, and gave no indication as to the effect of Henneberg's words upon him.

Henneberg turned directly toward him. "How do you regard this idea, monsieur le directeur?" he said.

"The idea is good," the other replied, with some reserve of manner; "to me, personally, it commends itself, but, of course, I, alone, can say nothing decisive. I am dependent upon my finance committee. And, besides, you need to have the consent of the other mines, also. From us alone you would not get the help you need."

"But you alone are of more importance than all the others taken together," Henneberg said, persistently; "do not forget, monsieur le directeur, that we have paid you, within the last two years, six hundred millions for an article which, at the utmost, is worth four hundred and fifty millions. Whatever may become of us in the future, you have already profited to the extent of a hundred and fifty millions, money down, and this really makes it your duty to give us credit, at least up to half that sum. If you agree to my proposition and accept stock in payment, we are relieved from all anxiety. Of course, I take for granted that you would not bring it into the Bourse without suitable consideration for the state of the market."

The president of the mining company remained impassive as ever.

"Go on and found your stock-company," he said; "when you get it established we will decide upon your proposition."

"Since the matter in question is very comprehensive and very difficult to handle," Henneberg went on, "we must exercise great prudence, and must avoid precipitate action. In two weeks we cannot possibly get our company formed, send out our prospectuses, and open our subscriptions. These preliminaries, I should say, would require six weeks at least. The loan, whose payment is called for, is due in a fortnight. We must not separate to-day until we have made provision to meet this London obligation. These rocks passed, there is again plain sailing before us. Eight millions must be raised. Upon this the future of our enterprise depends absolutely. I have, personally, through a heavy sacrifice, procured a million and a half of ready money. I have, with the loss of half a

million francs, sold this house in which we now are. I expect that you all will make like efforts. You will make them more willingly if you reflect that everything will be a hundredfold returned to us if once we get safely past the tenth of October ; and, on the other hand, that everything is lost if we fail to meet this obligation."

A profound silence followed Henneberg's words. The two financiers looked at each other with anxious faces ; the president of the mine examined his watch ; Baron Agostini seemed broken and absent-minded ; Zagal played nervously with his heavy gold chain and his round eyes roamed from one to another. Count Beira was the first to speak. "We have scarcely yet recovered," he said, hesitatingly, "from our surprise at being so abruptly recalled to Paris. What monsieur le baron has had to say is most unexpected. The situation is entirely different from what we had supposed. I do not feel that I really understand it now. To make up the eight millions will not be difficult, however. I am ready for my part—"

"How much ?" broke in Henneberg.

"I cannot say off-hand. The matter is not so urgent, I must look into my affairs a little. Probably we all of us must do the same. Let us meet again in a few days, in a week, say. Then we can each of us make his proposition."

Murmurs of approval were audible, and Zagal added : "That is the least—a few days' breathing space."

The men all rose, and, in little groups, made brief comments before leaving. "This contribution for destitute milliardaires is amusing," Kohn said, coming up to Henneberg.

"I admire your inexhaustible hilarity," Henneberg replied in an exasperated tone.

"It is because I despise money. The first requisite for a financier is contempt for money," Kohn said smiling.

At this moment Baron Agostini joined them : "A good idea," he said, "your stock-company, my dear

baron. The quicksilver, as it were, a metal security for the stock we issue. A very good idea."

"Stock with quicksilver value," Kohn observed; and, as he went out, he whispered to Count Beira, who did not at all understand what he meant: "If only quicksilver is not too mobile for a support!"

The enemies of the ring must have known more than Henneberg supposed, for, in the next few days, extremely disturbing indications appeared. There was an alarming amount of Almaden offered at the Bourse, and in the quicksilver market there were sales for future delivery. The most serious thing was that certain great customers of the French-Oriental bank withdrew their deposits. Baron Agostini was just preparing to return to Brittany when the three heads of departments from the bank, came to see him, and made known to him that there was great need of an immediate supply of ready money for the bank. Its paper began to be regarded with distrust. That day it had been refused by one of the most important banks, and it would not be safe to offer their signature a second time there. If the refusal became publicly known the worst might be feared. In no case must the baron leave Paris. The situation absolutely required his presence.

Baron Agostini used his last strength of self-command as long as his co-workers were present, and only the tremulous motion of his head gave any reason to suspect the impression which their news made upon him. He bade them return to the bank and quietly pursue their regular routine of duty, saying that he would take the subject into consideration. To the baroness he telegraphed that business would not allow him to prolong his vacation any further, but that she was not to be disturbed by this. Then he telephoned Henneberg to come to him at once, and as soon as the latter appeared, made known to him the steps that had been taken by his heads of departments.

Henneberg's face grew grey as he listened, and he set his teeth hard.

"The most urgent thing now is," Agostini said, as

Henneberg remained silent, "that you come to my aid. This is more urgent than the London obligation."

"That I see," Henneberg replied, "but I don't understand why you depend upon me. You are one of the money-kings; for thirty years you have held a commanding position in the financial world; you know personally all the great bankers, both French and foreign; it is far easier for you than for me, to obtain assistance, if you will make personal effort."

Baron Agostini would not let him go on. "That is all talk," he said, with senile violence, "and is of no service in the case. My personal effort? Do you think it would be well for me to go and confess myself to Baron Zeil, for instance, or to Count Halevy de Bruges, and implore assistance? At that price, I would save neither myself nor my bank. My best friends have drawn away from me of late. Three months ago, my colleague, Gallois of the Gironde Commercial bank said to me: 'My poor Agostini, be careful! you are in a bad way.' I gave myself into your hands. That was, perhaps, an error. But it is your business, now, to help me out of the difficulties into which you have brought me."

In proportion to Agostini's increasing excitement, Henneberg grew cooler. "Be assured, my dear baron, that on my part, I will not be idle. But at this moment every man must do his utmost. It is not a time for any of us to sulk or to reproach one another. If you, from despondency or obstinacy, fold your hands and do nothing, you harm yourself, not me."

"Pardon me," the baron said angrily, "I am not at all in difficulties. You, only, are embarrassed; and it is you who must look about for help. You forget that I only need to sacrifice you, and I myself am freed from all further anxiety."

"How is that?" Henneberg asked derisively.

"How is it? You are dreaming, are you? I only need to throw your Almadens upon the market, and to sell the quicksilver that is in pawn to me, and I am secure."

"Let us examine into this," Henneberg said, and his disdainful smile had not vanished. "You carry for the syndicate 214,000 Almadens. The last bi-monthly settlement gave the price at 670. This makes about 143 million francs. When we began this affair, Almadens were 180, which is about their actual value. If you sell us out, the price drops at least to 150, perhaps lower. You get therefore about 32 millions. Loss, 109 millions; that is to say, nine millions more than your stock with the dividends amounts to. Do you follow me?"

Baron Agostini looked into vacancy, and his under jaw trembled.

"It is the same with the quicksilver that you have in pledge," Henneberg went on cruelly. "You have about 800,000 flasks. Your loan is to the amount of 150 francs on the flask. This makes 120 million francs. The natural price of the article is about 75 francs. If you force a sale, you will hardly get 50, which at most will make 40 million francs, leaving you here 80 millions out of pocket. On the additional 500,000 flasks on which, in London and in Brussels, 75 francs had been raised, you have given 60 francs more—30 millions. This is lost to the last penny, if you sell in haste. According to my calculations, your whole loss would amount to 219 million francs, which means all your own property, and a good deal more than half of the deposits which remain to the bank. Hence, there is no sense in your saying that you will throw me over. You ruin me, no doubt, but yourself with me; and yourself first."

Baron Agostini breathed heavily and unevenly. "It is all your fault," he raged; "I don't know why I have not been on my guard against you."

"This reflection comes too late," Henneberg retorted, with equally brutal frankness; "we are now in the same boat; and, together, we go to the devil or we come out safe. Remember, that all our difficulties are over as soon as we get our stock-company established. Until then, you will have to try to strike one or another of your colleagues for the needed amount,

however much your pride may kick against it. And, on my part, I shall act with equal promptness."

He rose to go. Baron Agostini stretched a trembling hand toward him. "You are going to leave me alone," he complained, almost tearfully; "what shall I do? Upon whom can I depend? My wife is not here, either."

Henneberg looked at the old man with mingled scorn and contempt. He had noticed the decline of Agostini's mental strength for months, but that he had become so enfeebled as this was a surprise. In the usual routine of daily life, the baron did not as yet show himself incapable. Silent he had always been, and his present taciturnity could not be regarded as a sign of mental enfeeblement; his manners and dress were, as always, faultless; his chivalrous courtesy towards his wife had remained unimpaired; and he played whist at the club no worse than he had always done. It was only when he came into circumstances which required extraordinary efforts of thought and of will, that his loss of mental strength betrayed itself.

"Somebody to depend upon, dear baron," Henneberg said sharply; "what the devil! Somebody to depend upon? You are not a child to be afraid of being left alone! Go to your club, if you want company! There will not be many people there just now, but you can make up a game of whist any time. But don't say a word about business."

"That is never done at the club," the baron said, with a reminiscence of his earlier pride in correctness of manners.

"Very good! Then don't do it now; for if you let it be supposed that you have any causes for anxiety, you would not even find a partner for a game of whist. And, above all things, leave the baroness in peace. I hope you will not disturb her. It is fortunate that she is in Brittany, and our troubles are out of her sight. She must stay there till we have hewn our way through. That is a respect that you owe to the baroness."

"Concerning the respect I owe to my wife, I accept no man's instruction," the baron said with dignity.

"Certainly not. I only meant—Well, then : Courage ! I shall stand by you. But compose yourself as much as possible. Remember that I lose nothing but money if we go on to the rocks, but you have a great name and reputation in the world of finance at stake. Although you are the chief owner in your bank, still there are other stockholders and there are many depositors. You are responsible to them, but I am responsible to nobody."

"What !" Agostini exclaimed, "not responsible towards me?"

"Yes, of course ; in a way, yes. But that is only moral responsibility, which is not so important. I was thinking of legal responsibility, in court, I mean."

"In court !" The words were like drops of molten lead falling on the baron's ear. His face was distorted for an instant as if by a sharp twinge of physical pain, and his head shook.

"Good-bye, then, dear baron," Henneberg said, at last. "This evening, about nine, I will look in. It is to be hoped we may have good news for each other." He extended his hand, into which, hesitatingly, the baron laid two fingers of his own, and went out, passing the lackeys in the ante-room and on the stairs—now not in their grand livery, because the baroness was absent—with head held as high, and glance as hard and cold as ever in the height of his prosperity.

When Baron Agostini was alone he literally collapsed like an india-rubber figure which had been punctured. His capacity for resolute action was destroyed, but he had a full consciousness of Henneberg's conduct towards himself. He had at first patronized the younger man, then admired him : the syndicate had seemed to him a very brilliant conception, the Almaden speculation which was grafted upon it a clever trick of the Bourse united with a serious monetary scheme. To his co-workers in the French-Oriental bank, who, a few months after the ring had

been formed, attempted respectfully to warn him, he explained, in a friendly way: "We Frenchmen are too timid. We do not venture beyond the trodden paths. This Prussian, on the contrary, is bold, original and full of ideas. He calculates prudently, like a German, and acts daringly, like an American; we are sure to succeed if we copy his methods."

When the difficulties began, the old man became anxious, he spoke of curtailing his share in the syndicate, did not propose to become involved to any dangerous extent; but Henneberg held him fast and would not let him go, persuading and threatening, depicting, with the skill of a preaching friar, the two worlds—an inferno of ruin, the penalty of cowardice; a paradise of untold millions, the reward of valour. Baron Agostini felt himself in an iron grip, and made no further effort to escape. The undaunted courage of Henneberg's words and bearing inspired him with confidence. He lamented, privately—on general principles of self-respect, so to speak—that he had delivered himself over to Henneberg, but he felt secure in the other's ability to bring everything to a prosperous termination.

Within the past three days this confidence had been rudely shattered. The critical moment of the struggle was at hand, and instead of shielding the baron with his own body, Henneberg placed him under fire. His valiant talk was all brag, then? He slipped away at the moment when others most needed him? This was a frightful awakening.

The baron was embittered towards Henneberg because the latter had presented to him as carefully matured, firmly grounded plans, a something which proved to be mere empty dreaming; but he was even more bitter towards himself, in that he could have been deceived by the illusions of a schemer. His irritation against Henneberg was, however, exceeded by his fear of him. The baron knew that Henneberg was indispensable to himself at this crisis of the adventure, but he was conscious of the other's pitiless hardness and selfishness, which scarcely veiled itself

behind an exterior of common civility. He felt as an Alpine climber might feel at the most dangerous point of a glacier, conscious that he was entirely in the hands of his guide, and suspecting the man's intention to rob, or perhaps even to murder him. A horror seized him when Henneberg had gone. This cool adventurer had no idea of saving him, he thought, but used him as a last stake in a cut-throat game, where he himself had nothing more to lose. There must be an escape from this shameful dependence. Alone, however, he could not encounter his enemy; alone, he could not carry on the war. He was too feeble, and he was too anxious. He must have some one at his side to inspire him with confidence. Henneberg had almost threateningly insisted that the baroness should not be sent for. Naturally: he was afraid of her. She, alone, had any ascendancy over him. It was scarcely courteous to summon her at this time to Paris, but courtesy must give way. In his distress it was permissible to call for help. The mere presence of this strong, decided and tranquil woman was a protection to him. He knew not why, nor at this moment did he ask, but he felt sure that behind that stately figure he could shelter himself from attack.

His will was too much broken for him to decide at once even on the simple measure of sending her a telegram; but after, for a whole long hour, he had tortured himself with attempts to do it, and the subsequent failures, he finally came to the point; he telegraphed, begging the baroness to return to Paris at her earliest convenience, saying that he was in circumstances of distress, where her intelligence and, at any rate, her kindness would be of inestimable value to him. This being done, he felt somewhat more confident, and pulled himself together sufficiently to go to the bank, and, by his presence, re-assure his heads of departments.

Henneberg was meditating, as he left the baron, upon possible expedients for getting over the embarrassment of the moment. A run upon the French-Oriental bank was, again, a disaster upon which he had

not counted. If this were not averted, the storm would break before the London loan became due, and the founding of a stock-company would come far too late to be of any service. He reflected upon the situation calmly, for he had accustomed himself for several weeks to consider the worst possibilities, even complete ruin, and he had taken his precautions for this case. He had arranged to "fall easy" himself. But he would fight till the last moment, from self-respect or from vanity. His opponents, and especially that one great speculator whose enormous purchases of Almaden had not ceased during two years, should not see themselves in the position of victors able to set their feet upon the neck of the vanquished. He now proposed remorselessly to make use of his accomplices. He would take their last drop of blood. Perhaps from the extreme sacrifice victory might come; so much the better, if it did. But if not, it would cause him not the slightest regret that his comrades should lie upon the field, a prey to vultures and wolves.

He caught himself more and more frequently in a savage way wondering how they would look when they began to creep away. The unspeakable General Zagal! whether he would seek to set on foot another revolution in his country in order to pilfer on all sides a new fortune? And poor Count Beira, not over strong of brain! Would he establish new street railways, or content himself to spend the evening of his days in genteel poverty at Wiesbaden! And the others—what thrashing about, what wide-opened mouths seeking revenge, when these sharks should lie out on dry ground! It vexed him that he could not hope to get an amusing spectacle of this kind at the expense of Kohn. That crafty knave had not delivered himself over completely, as the others had done. He had only assumed a limited responsibility. If he lost the three million francs which he had risked, he had still property enough, and also he had his business as a broker, which would, in a short time, make him rich again. Almost as diligently as he sought for means of safety, did Henneberg also seek to find some means

whereby Kohn might be so enmeshed that the downfall of the group would drag him down; but so far, unsuccessfully.

The downfall of Baron Agostini was a different matter. Henneberg had made the baron the main pillar of the syndicate for the purpose of establishing a lasting tie between himself and the Agostinis. He desired to have, as it were, a legal right to come and go at all times, in their house. He desired to have his relations with them placed above all chance of social accident, and to make it impossible for the baron ever to neglect him, or even to throw him over, as the result of any caprice, or if irritated by any gossip. Perhaps it was this wish, rather than a desire for enormous wealth, that suggested to him the idea of the quicksilver ring. In the self-worship of his own strength, he despised the baron for his senile weakness of mind and will; but he could not be jealous of him; nor did he hate him. The baron was a hindrance, doubtless, that often roused his impatience, but he felt that this could not last much longer, and, meantime, the old man had his usefulness.

Her marriage had very nearly rehabilitated the baroness. It was true indeed that some extremely fastidious and high-bred ladies kept aloof from her, but there were many others of equal wealth and station with these, and of unquestionable descent, who chose to ignore completely her past history, and sought her society freely. For a man who had not the extremely high standing of Baron Agostini, it would have been, certainly, a false step to marry the mistress of the late Count Rigalle; but to marry the widow of Baron Agostini was to run no risk of incurring disapproval, even in the very strictest salons.

That the collapse of the ring would give to the baron his death blow, Henneberg did not for a moment doubt, though whether the excitement and humiliation would kill him quickly or slowly, could not be foreseen. This conviction mingled an exciting hope—wicked, but none the less pleasing on that account—with Henneberg's heavy anxieties concern-

ing the future. At the same time, a worrying uncertainty as to how the baroness would regard the disaster, overlay, and in a degree smothered, this feeling in his heart. It was so difficult to tell what she would do, in any given case, and the code of morals—different from every other known—which she had laid down for herself, contained so many entirely unexpected decrees! He trusted, however, to his own daring and his own determination to conquer the beautiful, self-willed woman, who for two years, had been the one great incitement of his life; and he tranquillised himself with the assurance that, once she were free, he should know how, with the might of a desire that made his will unbending, to master her, no matter what had gone before.

The situation appeared to his mental vision in the form of a singular picture. Before him yawned an abyss, filled with impenetrable clouds. On the further side, the baroness sat on the terrace of her Breton château and looked across, with something like a promise in her brilliant dark eyes. Yet, how to reach her? This was the problem of the hour. He must bridge the gulf in some way, or seek to fill it, were it with the bodies of men. Which he should do was a matter of indifference to him—only to cross, in some way, the impassable gulf, and reach her on the terrace there. Could he but be there, it would not disturb him in the least, whatever groans or cries of distress might follow him.

Henneberg went first to General Zagal, who occupied a magnificent house near the Arc de Triomphe. He explained to the South-American the situation of the bank, and that he must make some sacrifice, or else lose everything, while he would save everything if the bank stood firm. Zagal writhed like a snake under his words and look. He cursed the day on which he had first heard of the quicksilver syndicate. But Henneberg only smiled derisively, dilated on the necessity of protecting the bank, and never ceased, until Zagal, overpowered, groaned out that he would consult his brother-in-law, who had recently arrived in Paris.

The money was needed on the instant, it was plain, for the dawning anxiety of the depositors would increase hourly; but nothing more could be obtained from Zagal but the promise that he would go to see his brother-in-law, immediately after *déjeuner*.

From Zagal, Henneberg drove to Kohn's, and found him at table in company with the painter, Pierre. Kohn would not hear of interrupting his repast, but invited the visitor to share it. The meal was not a prolonged one, for before twelve o'clock, Kohn must be at the Bourse; but during its progress the master of the house chatted vivaciously and diffusively, as usual about paintings and artists, and manifested a tranquillity of mind, a withdrawal from all thoughts of business of whatever kind, that filled Henneberg with envy, wrath, and reluctant admiration. Not until Kohn had luxuriously enjoyed the last bit of his exceptional calville, did he allow himself to say to his sombre visitor: "Now tell me what has given me the pleasure—" which was a signal to Pierre to take his leave.

Henneberg had a message to entrust to Kohn. He was to go to the great speculator who had so long raided Almaden, and, in Henneberg's name, make propositions for peace. As Kohn looked much surprised, Henneberg went on to explain. Kohn was to point out to the enemy that he would make more by coming to an agreement than by continuing hostilities. If he resisted, Almaden would be made to go up to 1,000 francs, to 1,500 francs, and he would get the worst of it in the end. If he would agree, he would be allowed to cover at the present quotations, and should then be taken into the syndicate, so that he might quickly make good his loss.

"If you are successful, my dear Kohn," Henneberg said, "that saves us. The bank can without fatal loss, unload its Almadens, and obtain enough ready money to leave us undisturbed to mature peacefully our plan for the stock-company."

Kohn, smiling, praised this idea, and promised to act in accordance with Henneberg's instructions. After the Bourse, at four o'clock, he would report.

Henneberg awaited the result of this step with a good deal of impatience. To control this, in a reasonable degree, he went to the bank, with the idea of seeing what the situation was there. The great hall was unusually full; everywhere sat or stood groups of people talking eagerly but in low voices, and at the counter where the checks were paid men waited in crowds. An old doorkeeper, whose breast was covered with ribbons and medals, rose from his seat behind the table at the door, when he saw Henneberg, saluted respectfully, and said that monsieur le baron was upstairs in his private office.

"I will not disturb him," Henneberg said, "I only looked in as I was passing. There seems to be a good deal going on here to-day?"

"What do you think, monsieur le baron," the man said, in a voice lowered to a whisper which was full of excitement and wrath, "it has been reported that we are in difficulties. The French-Oriental bank in difficulties! Then, everything stops! And now the fools come, in a crowd, and call for their money. See those men there at the counter, monsieur le baron. It's getting more quiet now, but an hour and a half ago, you should have seen it! You would have thought there was a riot. I have been here twenty-eight years, and I never saw anything like it before."

"They got what they wanted, then?" Henneberg asked, and through his monocle he inspected the crowd at the counter.

"How can any one ask that question!" exclaimed the door-keeper indignantly. "Of course they did! And now the doodles are ashamed of their scare, and are paying in over there at the other counter what they have just received at this one."

And it was a fact that some persons, not many, had crossed from the left side of the hall to the right, and had sat down at the long table to fill out blanks for deposit.

Henneberg observed the scene for a few minutes, and then went on. He was rejoiced, but surprised,

The machinery of the bank was working smoothly ; all claims were promptly paid ; the old man evidently had obtained money. Yes, Henneberg thought, it was an inestimable advantage to the baron to be his father's son. A self-made man, the artisan of his own fortunes, has only himself to depend upon. To such an hereditary dynasty of finance help flows in on every side, at a moment of danger.

Agostini's grandfather, a Levantine money-changer, had come to Paris in the time of the Directory, and had founded a banking business. Napoleon I. had made this man a baron. His son had changed the paternal bank into a stock-company, under the July monarchy ; and thirty years ago the third baron had succeeded his father as president of the company. Agostini had almost a century of undisturbed financial success behind him, and now reaped the advantage of his family position. "The old man is, by himself alone, good for more than the other half-dozen of new-baked millionaires that I have to deal with." This was the conclusion of Henneberg's series of reflections, and with his contempt for such a physical and mental wreck there was mingled however, a certain involuntary respect for the magic of secure hereditary reputation.

Kohn did not come at four o'clock to Henneberg's house. He called him up by telephone instead, to say that the enemy had contemptuously refused the proposition of peace.

"When I offered him Almaden at 640, he laughed in my face and replied : 'I shall cover at 100.'"

"He will cover at 2000 !" cried Henneberg into the telephone so that the answer reached Kohn as a roar.

"We will hope so," hummed back the reply ; but the tone-colour was not so decided.

All the evening papers took note of the affair of the French-Oriental bank. The unfriendly said merely that a beginning of panic had manifested itself, but, in the course of the afternoon, confidence had been restored, as the current rumour of a suspension of payments had not been confirmed. Those papers which had reason to break a lance in defence of the bank and

the ring were extremely indignant at the base attack that had been made in the dark upon the good name of one of the greatest monetary houses in the country, and had no doubt that the authorities would proceed against the originators of this malicious rumour with the utmost decision, since these wretches were public enemies and, through undermining the general confidence, might easily bring unavertible disaster upon the business world and the community at large.

At nine o'clock in the evening Henneberg, according to agreement, appeared in the rue Fortuny. He found the baron alone in his smoking-room, cowering in the corner of a divan, smoking a strong cigar, which was not the first one, to judge by the condition of the atmosphere in the room, and gazing into vacancy. At Henneberg's entrance he raised his head, and without so much as offering him the tip of a finger as he had done in the morning, he feebly asked : "Well?"

Henneberg was surprised. He had expected to find the baron triumphant, with crest erect.

"I congratulate you," he said ; "you have evidently worked successfully. You see, my advice was good. May I ask, from what rock your rod drew forth water?"

Agostini had the air of not hearing this question, and repeated his inquiry : "Well? How did you succeed?"

Henneberg was obliged to confess that there was almost nothing to say ; a promise from Zagal ; that was all.

"But how much have you obtained, dear baron? How large a provision has been made?"

The baron gave some inarticulate murmur in reply, and sank back into inexorable silence, from which no talk or question of Henneberg could draw him forth. The latter shook his head, undisguisedly scrutinized the old man for a time through his monocle, then asked : "Shall I call your man?"

"Why?" Agostini asked, slightly stirred by this question.

"Dear baron, I fear you are ill; or, at least, very tired. You really need repose."

"I dare say," the baron rejoined, in a surly tone. "Your communications, certainly, are not very reassuring."

"For the moment you have provided nobly; to-morrow will be Sunday; nothing can hurt us to-morrow. Forget business for thirty-six hours and take care of yourself, dear baron. Day after to-morrow we will set to work with renewed strength."

Agostini made no reply; he only straightened himself in his corner, leaned his head back on a cushion, and blew rings of smoke into the air. Henneberg decided that it would be best to leave him alone. As he went away he recommended to the servant in waiting in the anteroom to keep an eye to his master, as the baron did not seem to be quite well. His own thought was that the end was nearer for the old man than he had thought and secretly had hoped. It vexed him only that he had not been able to learn how Agostini had obtained help, and how much help he had obtained.

The baron had not thought it necessary to reveal to him the state of the case. There had been paid in about noon, by a small Balkan state, of which the bank was agent, the money to meet coupons of its loan falling due the 13th of October, and it was by the use of these funds that the bank had been able to satisfy its depositors.

Chance had favoured Agostini here, for the Balkan state might not have furnished the requisite funds until some days later. This seemed to him a hint of destiny. Since a space was granted him he felt that he must use it. A telegram from the baroness which he received the next morning made it easier for him to decide on a desperate step. She telegraphed from Lorient that she was *en route*, and would arrive in Paris about midnight. Now his distressing solitude would be at an end. He would now have some one with him upon whom he could depend. With more courage

than he had hitherto had, he set forth about noon on his painful errand to Baron Zeil.

In the first half of the century, the Zeils and the Agostinis had been savage rivals and enemies. The stroke of policy converting them both into supports of the Second Empire had reconciled them with each other and they had peacefully shared the world between them. The Zeils took the West, the Agostinis the East ; the former established railways, the latter, lines of steamships ; the Zeils, who were Jews, supplied money to the Pope ; the Agostinis, who were Catholics, made loans to the Grand Turk. Since his marriage, Agostini's social relations with Zeil had ceased, for the Baroness Zeil would not receive the Baroness Agostini. Zeil, however, did not appear surprised when Agostini came to his house. "I was just driving out to the hunt," he said ; "what gives me this pleasure, my dear old friend ?"

"I will not keep you long, my dear baron," Agostini replied : "I come to-day seeking for help."

Zeil contracted his eyebrows as he listened, while Agostini revealed to him the situation of the bank, which he represented as merely an embarrassment for the moment, to be easily relieved by a not very large amount of ready money.

"I have been expecting your visit for years," Zeil said, when Agostini ceased speaking. "I fear that you are deceiving yourself now, on this subject. In my opinion the situation is very much more serious than you seem to think it, so serious that I see no possibility of doing anything."

Agostini sought to dispel this notion, sought to prove that Zeil was mistaken ; but the latter shook his head and replied : "I could never understand how you were willing to be connected with an adventurer like this Henneberg."

"The man has brilliant ideas."

"A man who has ideas must, from that very fact, awaken distrust. What have you and I to do with ideas ? Ideas are for paltry fellows who have to pull

the wool over men's eyes. We have no occasion to do that!"

"But you don't object to investing money in experiments in electrical transmission?"

"Only a few hundred thousand francs. If it amounts to anything, well and good; if not, it has been an amusement to me. In the same way, I buy Renaissance altars, which sometimes prove to be manufactured last year. But a venture which involves milliards, is quite another thing."

"I have no question myself that this quicksilver business is a good scheme."

"It may be so. But, then, you must keep the matter entirely in your own hands. You should put your Henneberg into a secretary's position, unless you shake him off entirely, which is always the most advisable. Such people have no idea how to handle a large capital. It has been a real grief to me to watch you this last year."

"I am obliged to you for this feeling, my dear baron, but I should like to have something more from you. Think what the results will be if I—if I am not able to go on." It was not easy for Agostini to put his thoughts into language. "The whole community would be thrown into confusion. The public would attack all the other banks of deposit. My downfall would cause other disasters. The danger is beyond our power to foresee."

"Unhappily, you do not at all exaggerate, dear baron. And exactly because these dangers are impending, we need to be unusually careful. Our first duty is to avert disaster from the banks and protect the community from a general crash. But in order to save those who are yet alive, we must let the dead go."

"And you throw me out among the dead, do you?"

"I only state a painful fact."

Agostini rose and drew himself up as much as he was able. "I see, then, that I have nothing to expect from you," he said.

Zeil shrugged his shoulders indecisively.

"I shall have to try to get it through alone, then," he said, "I am still Baron Agostini, my dear Baron Zeil."

"And I hope that you will long remain to us," Zeil answered, with a faint smile, as he conducted his visitor to the door. When Agostini had gone, Zeil gave orders to his servant, under no circumstances again to admit that gentleman.

Before Agostini had gone to Zeil, he had planned two or three other visits. The lack of success of his first step deprived him of all further elasticity and he returned home completely discouraged, where he stupefied himself with smoking and aimless brooding over the situation. From this beneficent doze he was suddenly roused by Henneberg, who, towards evening came in unannounced and asked abruptly: "Have you heard anything about legal proceedings, baron?"

"Legal proceedings?" Agostini said, and remained open-mouthed.

"Has there no summons been sent? Has no one been here?"

"What are you talking about?" the old man said. "I don't understand you."

"So much the better. I have been seeing Zagal. His ambassador was at the house of the Minister of Justice to-day. He told Zagal's brother-in-law that the Minister had told him, as the latest news, that he had directed the attorney-general to open proceedings against the syndicate. Senators and deputies had so beset him that he had decided to take this step for the sake of peace. You understand, I laugh at this. Only on your account I should regret it."

"I know nothing about it, and I think it is all talk."

"At any rate I want to say to you that you have no occasion to be disturbed. You had a perfect right to employ your funds as you judged best. Neither can you be accused of dividing imaginary profits. For if the bank paid these dividends it must have had the money to do it. And that any one should dig up an obsolete statute against monopolists, to use it against us, is what I cannot believe. The government is too

up-to-date for that. They would be ashamed of such tom-foolery. What I am telling you, my dear baron, is the opinion of one of our great lawyers, a former president of the benchers. And so, once more, do not feel anxious, even if you receive a summons."

"I am obliged to you," Agostini said gloomily; "it was hardly worth while to bring all this rignmarole to me."

Henneberg bit his lips and departed abruptly.

At midnight the Baroness Agostini arrived in Paris. She was accompanied only by her maid and her steward. The other servants were left behind at the château. As she stepped from the train, her husband stood before her. At sight of him she started involuntarily. His moustache and "fly" were badly dyed, and had a flecked and smeared look. His monocle hung from his neck, for the muscles of his face had not the strength to hold it in the eye for more than a minute at a time; and the hard electric light deepened and darkened all the wrinkles of his emaciated face.

"What is it?" she whispered anxiously, as he bent over her hand and kissed it.

"Not here," he replied in a low voice, and he rather seemed to cling to her arm than to offer his. Without a word they passed through to the door of exit, where the landau of the baroness and a *char-à-banc* for the servants and the luggage were waiting. No sooner had the footman assisted the baron to enter the carriage and closed the door, than the old man turned to his wife; with his two trembling hands he clasped hers, he leaned his head against her shoulder and murmured:

"I thank you, Augusta. You are very kind to me. You come at the first call. You do not leave me alone. I thank you."

"But what is it?" she asked. "Do not keep me any longer in uncertainty."

"I am ruined. I have lost everything," was the answer.

"What did you say?" she exclaimed. "It is impossible! You, Agostini, ruined! Has the Bank of



France stopped payment ? This cannot be true. You are seeing ghosts."

"No, Augusta, or, rather, yes," he said, "I am seeing ghosts. But I see them because they are there ; and they stretch their arms out to me to drag me down with them into the grave."

He broke into a kind of smothered sobbing with which his whole wasted form shook like a dried branch in the wind. Her hand, as she gently passed it over his cheek, felt no tears ; but he shuddered convulsively under her touch.

The baroness had but a single thought ; he had undoubtedly gone mad. She knew that it sometimes occurs that a very aged person is seized with the delusion that he has lost everything and has become a beggar. Without doubt, this had happened to Agostini. She made no effort to get any further information from him. What value could anything have which he might say ? She endeavoured to soothe him with kind words and assurances that all would yet be well. He made no answer, but only shook his head, and clung to her, all the time, like a frightened child.

Rapidly as the carriage moved, the route from Quai d'Austerlitz to the rue Fortuny seemed endless ; each time a street lamp flashed its light through the window, the baroness saw the worn face, with shut eyes and trembling lips, that rested against her shoulder, and a terror came over her that all the efforts of her determined will was scarcely able to subdue. If they could only reach home ! Should she at once, in the night, send for a specialist in brain diseases, or would it be better to summon Henneberg first, and consult with him ? While she still hesitated, they reached the house.

From the street door to the inner rooms, all was brilliantly lighted. The lackeys were in their blue and silver, and stood, as usual, along the hall and on the stairs, to welcome their mistress ; the baroness passed them, without a look, apparently leaning on the baroness's arm, while, in reality, she held him up and

almost dragged him along. To the servant in attendance she gave orders that tea and cold fowl should be brought to the little salon. With the maid's help, she rapidly changed her travelling attire for a lace dressing-gown, and her shoes for slippers, used perfumed water for her face and hands, and hastened to rejoin the baron who, cowering in the corner of a divan, awaited her. When she had dismissed the maids and the men, and was alone with Agostini, she sat down by him, took his hands in hers, and in the gentlest tone of her musical voice she said : " Now tell me, *mon ami*, tell me the whole story."

" What I have to tell is only this," he said gloomily, " to-morrow we have reason to expect a run on the bank. Our resources are completely exhausted. My private fortune. The deposits. The money that we keep in hand for loans. My name will be cursed by thousands. The evening papers of to-night have begun the attack. There is to be a prosecution. I have reason to believe that, at daybreak, the police will be here. That is the situation."

The baroness still held to her idea that Agostini's imagination had conjured up all this alarming picture, and she answered tenderly : " You see things worse than they are, I believe. Let me give you a cup of tea ; then try to get to sleep, and in the morning we will see what can be done. By daylight things will seem more cheerful."

Her attempted consolation irritated the baron : " Augusta," he said, " you treat me like a child ! Do you not understand what I say ? I tell you again I am absolutely ruined, and I cannot save myself ; do you hear me ?"

" You have been too proud to ask for help, perhaps," she said, with the idea still of tranquillizing him. " Your friends would be eager to help you. Henneberg ——"

The baron interrupted her in an almost frenzied tone : " Do not mention his name to me," he cried. " Henneberg is a scoundrel !"

As the baroness looked at him in extreme surprise,

he went on : " This is due to him, entirely. He has ruined me, and now he leaves me to my destruction. He is either a knave or a madman. Perhaps both. The quicksilver syndicate was either folly or fraud. A plot against me. In my blind confidence I did not see it."

A sudden terror came over her. Suppose it were no figment of the imagination ? With increasing anxiety she begged him to give her further details. The baron related, hesitatingly and with difficulty, but with perfect clearness and without any lack of sequence, with all the names and figures, the history of the last five days : the meeting of the syndicate at Henneberg's house, his alarming revelations, the attack of the newspapers, the rumours at the Bourse, the dawning distrust of the public, the anxiety of yesterday at the bank, the postponement of the catastrophe through something almost a miracle, the unsuccessful appeal to Zeil ; he summoned a servant and had the evening papers brought from the library table, and he showed them to the baroness ; now she must accept the truth as to disaster ; and her husband's despair by degrees crept over her strong nerves, also.

" I understand, now," she said ; " but you must not be unjust towards Henneberg. He is just as much involved ——"

" I will not hear a word in defence of the wretch," the baron interrupted her, " he is unworthy of your friendship."

" He suffers just as much as you do. Perhaps more."

" You are mistaken, my child. He does not care. He has nothing to lose, no name, no position, scarcely any fortune. And he is young. He can begin his frauds over again, and be more successful another time. I implore you, Augusta, do not poison my last hours with the mention of that man."

" What !" she exclaimed in anxiety, " your last hours ? What do you mean ?"

" Oh, nothing," he rejoined. " An old man must

think of death, you know. But I will not be reminded of that adventurer."

She made no further attempt to defend Henneberg.

"But you do not seem to have thought of me," she went on. "I have something, you know. It was your gift. Take it again. Take it all. It will at least be enough to gain time for you."

Agostini kissed her hand and said, with a sad smile:

"You are not clever at arithmetic, any of you women. Just look at it. Your estate in Brittany is practically unsaleable. Your diamonds and the other things are worth a million francs, and you might get three or four hundred thousand for them from the dealers."

"But my *Rentes*——"

"Your 250,000 francs of *Rentes* would not be worth much over eight millions; certainly not nine. But that is all you have. It is no more than a drop on a hot plate. It will not save me, and it would simply ruin you. Oh, no, my child. Keep what you have. But it was kind to make the offer. You repay me lavishly for what I have done for you, and my foresight in separating your property from my own. You prove yourself at this moment to be what I thought you were—faithful and self-sacrificing. I am very grateful to you ——"

"Do not thank me," she interrupted him, "but let me act. Do not be obstinate, I implore you. You have always had confidence in my strength of will. You have said a hundred times that I could carry anything through that I undertook. Take my eight millions. Surely that will be enough for to-morrow. And let me go to the men, to Zeil and to the others, you will see that they will not refuse."

He shook his head slowly.

"You have no knowledge of these men. You have only seen them in your salon, never in their office. Against their ledgers even your magic could do nothing."

"I might at least try."

"I am not willing."

She was silent, discouraged. But she soon began again: "Very well; let the thing take its course. And if the worst happens, what then? You stop payment. This is a business misfortune. It is nothing unheard of in financial circles. You give up everything that you have. Then, we have still what belongs to me personally, which I owe to your generosity. We will leave Paris. I have no desire to remain here. We will live quietly at our château. You see there is no reason for despair."

Over his face a kind of tranquillity came, as he listened to her. "I thank you over and over," he said; and forcing a kind of jocoseness, he added: "I should not have expected, at my age and in my present circumstances to be able to say to myself: 'A beautiful woman loves me, for myself alone.' But, my child, in our family the men are not accustomed to let the women maintain them."

She sought to interrupt him, but he would not let her speak.

"Let the event run its course," he continued, "this was what you said yourself. But again I want to thank you for all that you have been to me. You have been the delight of my old age and could almost make ruin endurable. Hush! not a word! It was a mad venture, when I married you, six years ago. But now I know it was the wisest thing, perhaps the only wise thing, that I ever did in my life. You have done for me all that I promised myself you would do, all and more. You have guarded your honour and my own. This was not always easy, my poor child. That villain loved you ——"

She started up and looked at him with wide open eyes.

"Be tranquil," he said, "I have never disgraced you by one unworthy thought. I am sure you have always kept him at a distance. His very fidelity to you is a proof of it. If you had been less resolute, he would have long ago been faithless."

He ceased speaking and his sunken eyes rested upon her very tenderly. Before she could break the silence

which followed, he rose to his feet feebly, and with a faint groan :

"We have talked long enough ; it is nearly two o'clock and I am tired ; you, also, have fifteen hours' railway to recover from ; permit me to leave you, my child."

"You are right," she said ; "go to your rest, now, and may hope go with you and give you pleasant dreams. For you shall see all will yet be well for us."

She rang for his man.

"Come and let me know when monsieur le baron is in bed. I will come and bid you good night," she added, addressing Agostini.

"Oh no," the baron demurred, as he left the room, leaning heavily on his servant's arm.

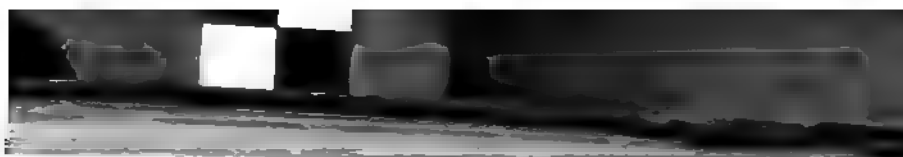
Ten minutes later the man reported, and the baroness went up to her husband's room. She sat down by his bedside silently. "I did not come to keep you talking," she said. "Let me sit here a little while. Do not pay any attention to me."

For a few minutes he lay quietly ; then he became restless, and after a time, he said to her : "Now go, my child."

"Not till you are asleep," she answered.

He sighed heavily, and turned his face towards the wall. As he remained perfectly quiet and breathed regularly, after a while she rose and moved softly away. At the door she glanced back, and by the faint light of the night-lamp in its crimson globe, it seemed to her that he had turned his head to look after her. Quickly she was at his bedside again and bent toward him. He lay still, with closed eyes, but the slight quiver of the face had not ceased ; evidently, however, he was asleep, though his rest was not tranquil. And again she moved slowly away, the thick carpet making her footsteps completely noiseless.

The following morning Henneberg lay in his bed—the silver tray with coffee on the table at his side, the morning papers strewn over the silk coverlet—and stared blankly at the carved angels which held up the canopy. The papers subsidized by the ring contained



the communication which he had sent to them the preceding evening, announcing that the syndicate would prosecute those journals which had put in circulation the calumny that legal proceedings were about to be instituted against the quicksilver ring; but other papers, in the service of the enemy, had in the most conspicuous place, under a heading in large type: "The Quicksilver Ring before the Correctional Police;" an article confirming the rumours of the previous day, and loading the government with praise for its decided measures towards "foreign scum." Then it seemed to him that he heard the bell of the telephone, although there were two rooms between. He sat up in bed to listen; and at the moment his man appeared to announce that monsieur le baron was called to the telephone. By monsieur le baron Agostini.

"Naturally!" Henneberg muttered to himself, "the old coward has seen the morning papers and his heart has gone down into his shoes again."

He put on his camel's hair dressing-gown and his crimson velvet slippers with their blue-fox trimming, and in a leisurely way proceeded to answer the summons.

"Hullo! hullo!" he called into the mouthpiece; "what is it?"

"Is it you, Henneberg?" a voice came, which hit him like a heavy electric shock. He started and nearly dropped the receiver.

"Do I hear aright?" he stammered. "The baroness?"

"Yes. Come to me at once."

"But how does it happen you are here? I thought you were four hundred miles away. When did you arrive?"

"I will tell you presently. Come at once."

"Has anything happened?"

"Come at once, come at once," was reiterated impatiently.

"I am coming," he returned obediently, and hung up the receiver on its hook. That was the baroness,

and no mistake ! He knew it was perfectly useless to ask her any further question. He ordered his carriage, and made himself ready in all haste. With military despatch he was in the rue Fortuny. As he entered the house he perceived the lackeys, who were not in their livery, standing in a group, and eagerly, but in low voices, talking with each other. As he glanced at them, they ceased, and furtively separated. He hastened up-stairs and was met on the first landing by the baroness's maid, who said ; "madame la baronne is up-stairs," and indicated him to go up a second flight. To his look inquiring she replied : "I am afraid monsieur le baron has been taken ill, but I do not know." On the floor above, the baroness came to meet him in the first room ; she sent the maid away with a gesture of the hand, locked the door as soon as the woman had gone out, grasped Henneberg by the hand with an iron grip, led him silently into the next room, beyond which lay the baron's bedroom, and, at last, said to him hoarsely : "The baron shot himself last night. He is lying dead in there."

With an unconscious wrench he freed himself from her grasp ; he opened his eyes wide, and stared at her. The baroness stood before him, an image of consternation ; she was in her lace dressing-gown, her dark hair knotted at the back of her head in a disordered mass, her face pallid as death itself. She breathed heavily. Her eyes rested with painful eagerness upon Henneberg, as if she expected something from him.

He made an effort to master himself. "Does any one else know ?" he asked.

"Only the valet de chambre. When he went in there half an hour ago he found the baron dead. The man had the presence of mind to fasten the door and send word to me through my maid that he must speak to me at once. When I came out into the boudoir he met me, with horrified aspect, and told me what had happened. I ran up and found that the poor baron was already cold and rigid. He must have been dead for several hours. He must have shot himself directly after I left him last night. And he

seemed so collected. I ought never to have left him alone." She wrung her hands, and dropped, as if faint, into a chair.

"Do not reproach yourself, Augusta; there is no use in that," Henneberg said, roughly. "Where is the valet de chambre?"

"I sent him instantly for a doctor, and then I called you up."

"The second thing was reasonable, but not the first; no doctor can bring the dead to life; and, for the moment, the fewer people know this, the better. Did you instruct your man to keep the secret?"

"He himself begged me to keep it, till I had had time to consult with my friends."

"He is an intelligent fellow. He shall not have cause to repent his conduct. Now all we can do is to await the doctor's arrival. I will see him. He need not see the body or be told anything definite."

"But what is the object of secrecy? We incur a heavy penalty."

"I will take the risk of that." He was silent, and his aspect betrayed the turmoil of his thoughts.

"Will you see him?" the baroness said, and was about to rise.

"No," he answered curtly, and laid his hand upon her arm to detain her; "it is not a pleasant sight, and there is no need." He seemed to struggle with himself for a moment, then drew a chair near the baroness, sat down and looked at her resolutely in the eyes. "Augusta, we are in a situation of great danger, but we must get the better of it. We shall do this, if you remain firm, and I hope you will. Most unhappily I cannot be with you and help you in bearing the legal annoyances of the next few days. However painful this may be to me, I must at once leave you, for I have to flee the country. I have yet time to catch the noon train for Brussels."

"But why?" she asked anxiously.

"Because I am in danger of arrest. The authorities are only too glad to set on their pack at a foreigner, a Prussian, whether he is innocent or guilty."

They shall not have the pleasure of seeing me a prisoner. I must be at liberty in order to defend myself. Then they can get no hold upon me, for we have kept out of reach of the law. We have been as shrewd as the prosecuting officer is."

"And the others? Beira? Zagal? Must they be notified? Do you take them with you?"

"I should think not. Each for himself! They ought to be on the look-out!"

"But---you are their leader. They depend upon you."

"Take care whom you trust in. But what could we do with these staring idiots? Let us come to essentials. I leave Paris without regret, if I take with me a certainty: promise me that you will come as soon as it can be done without attracting notice."

She started, and repeated as if in surprise: "That I will come?"

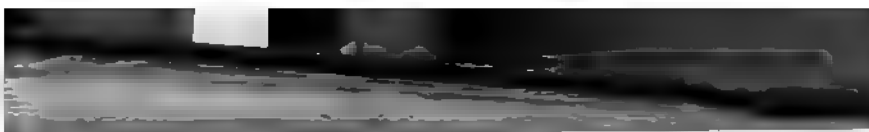
"What does this surprise mean? Come? Certainly. I hope so. I expect it. The obstacle is removed. Now you must be mine. Now you are mine, Augusta," he said, seeking to put his arm about her.

She drew her chair hastily away. "Do you say that now?" she said. "Here? One step from his dead body?"

"You are, perhaps, afraid that he may hear us and object?" Henneberg rejoined roughly. "The moments are precious. Let us lose no time in pretences. The man was nothing to you, and could be nothing."

"Be silent," she cried, "I allow no word against my benefactor."

"What a perfunctory way of talking that is!" he replied, with ill-restrained violence; "the pose of a bereaved widow is not appropriate in the present case. Let us not smooth matters over. Let us not conceal facts under a veil of the ideal. You were a young and beautiful woman, and you married a frightful old man. Is not that the truth? And was it for love, or out of respect for the character of this worn-out old roué? or was it, perhaps, from admiration for the intellect of this feeble-minded dotard? You sold your-



self—for money and a title. This is the actual truth. Have the courage, now, to look the truth in the face. I do not reproach you for what you did. I understand and I pardon, because I love you. Are you listening, Augusta? because I love you and because I want you. And so, do not exasperate me with a simulation of grief which, really, between us, is irrational. That, you keep to show society. You are, of course, shocked by the catastrophe; I am, myself; but the feeling is transient, and anything like real grief you cannot possibly feel for that man. It would be unnatural."

During his impetuous appeal her face grew stony. She looked up and said, with a very quiet, frightfully serious tone: "Every word that you have just said, has been a knife-thrust in my heart. I have probably deserved this martyrdom; but now the expiation is sufficient. Leave me at once."

"You send me away?" he said, becoming reckless. "I will not go. I am fighting for the one aim of my life—for my life itself. You have nothing to expiate. In my eyes you are without sin. The past is past. Let us think of the future. I ask happiness from you, and I will give you happiness so far as a man can do it. But do not look at me in this way. Have I not striven hard enough to win you? For whom have all my exertions been made, but for you? I desired to have millions, that you might again live as a queen. I stooped to obtain the title of baron, that you might have the rank to which you had become accustomed. Does this deserve no gratitude from you? Should I ever have planned this syndicate but for the desire to win you?"

"That is not true," she interrupted, with a voice that betrayed extreme horror at what he had said; "tell me it is not true. I will not be guilty of his death."

"I cannot tell you so, for it is true. Guilty, you say? How were you guilty? To be beautiful, to be coveted, to drive men mad, that is no crime; it is,

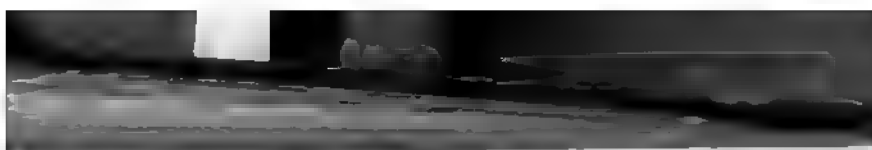
perhaps, a curse. At any rate, it is a gift. Your guilt is slight."

"And now there lies a dead man between us," she said in a dull voice, "that changes everything."

"What does that amount to?" he exclaimed, with flashing eyes and grimly distorted face. "I step across that corpse. Blood is a good cement, the best we know. When later you remember him who lies there, you will have this also to think of, that I would risk a crime myself to win you. I say, a crime; for, had there been need of it, I would have killed him with my hand, as he has done with his own."

"You horrify me. Go, go. I should like at least to be able to think of you without a shudder." She covered her face with her hand, and turned away from him.

Henneberg was now quite beside himself, losing the last trace of self-control. He sprang to his feet, he came up to the baroness and laid his hand recklessly upon her shoulder, which she endured as if paralyzed; and he said in a voice which he scarcely took pains to keep low: "I am to go, you tell me? Your saying it makes no difference to me. I must have you. What! There lies a dead man; above my head the roof is falling in, chaos has come again; and all shams fall from us. We are two human souls absolutely bare to each other's sight. What is the use of all this prudery? this consideration for virtue? For weeks, you loved me, once. All your grand airs of to-day cannot annul that fact. And before that, there were other men, not as good as I. You had not led a nun's life when you went with me to Hyères. Your past promised me a future. You must keep that promise. You must do it. We have sinned, both of us. We belong together. It is simply impossible for me to forget you. I have often wished I could. But I cannot. There is no interest left for me in life. A good table, a good cigar—that is all that remains for me. It is not enough. I must have you, besides! And I would rather strangle you with my own hand than lose you." And in his desperation he actually took



her throat between his two hands, as if he were about to murder her.

With a movement rapid as a flash, she shook him off and sprang to her feet. "Henneberg," she said, "you have lost your reason, you are insane."

"On the contrary, I was never so clear and reasonable and honest in my life as now," he answered, without falling back at all, his burning eyes fixed steadily upon her face, so deathly white. "I tell you that without you I cannot live. There is nothing in the world to me but you. It is probably folly, like everything else, but it is a fact. I do not admit your refusal. You have no right to refuse me. We have been through too much together. Augusta, give up this folly. Let us be happy and merry together. I can offer you wealth. I was not fool enough to let myself be bled to the last drop like him there."

"You take me for a woman to be bought with money, then?"

"To be bought?"

"Yes. You have just shown me that you do."

"No. I take you for the woman that belongs to me. It is inconceivable that you should refuse me now. I have been without you so long. We were not made to suffer as I have done, but to enjoy! Six intolerable years have I allowed that fool to stand between me and my happiness. Dead, he shall no longer interpose. If his corpse lies between us, I spurn it with my foot. You are mine now, and I will never let you go."

He stretched his arms toward her, but, before he was aware of what she was about to do, she had sprung to her feet, grasped him firmly by the arm, led him towards the door of the adjacent room, thrown it open and compelled him to enter with her, saying:

"Let me hear you say that in his presence!"

Henneberg started back. In the partly darkened room he saw indistinctly the rigid form upon the bed, and a brownish-red spot upon the white pillow where the head of the dead man lay. With disgust and horror he struggled back from the threshold.

"What is the use of this theatrical stroke?" he murmured. "Augusta, hear me! Come!"

The baroness paid no further attention to him; she went across to the bed, knelt down, and burying her face in the coverlet, began to sob bitterly.

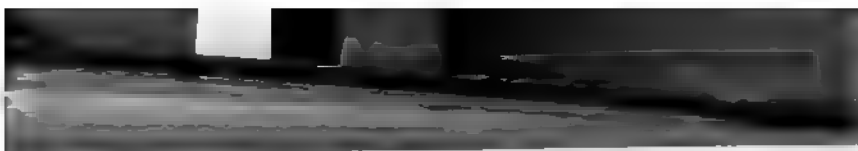
Henneberg lingered at first; then, in spite of his reluctance, he went in, approached the baroness and laid his hand upon her shoulder. She sprang up with a cry like that of some wild creature of the woods shot to death.

"Leave me!" she exclaimed, "leave me! or I shall ring for my servants."

Her face was still very pale, but her eyes were no longer tearful. They blazed upon Henneberg, and as he met her look, his own face grew as white as hers. There seemed to be something in her attitude like that of a panther about to spring. There was no chance left for doubt; in her eyes he read his final sentence, from which there could be no appeal. He shivered from head to foot, he bent his head, he turned and very slowly dragged himself to the locked door of the other room. The baroness stood motionless, with the same menace in her look and attitude, until he had turned the key, opened the door and gone out; then she began to totter, stretched her hands out for support and fell, helpless, upon the floor.

When she recovered consciousness, her husband's man stood by her and was rubbing her hands diligently. She repulsed him unconsciously, rose to a sitting posture and looked confusedly about her. She was on the floor, near the bed. Her hair hung over her shoulders like a heavy black cloak. Consciousness, by degrees, returned to her, and with it memory and knowledge of the time and place. She rose, supported carefully by the man, went into the other room, sat down, twisted up her hair and secured it, then said to the servant: "Have you been here long?"

"Pardon, madame la baronne; I just now came in, and saw madame la baronne lying upon the floor. I was deadly frightened. But, thank God, madame la baronne seems to be recovering. The excitement has



been too great. Madame la baronne should go to bed."

"Yes. Has the doctor come?"

"I have not seen him," the servant answered, "but I have left word for him to come up-stairs as soon as he arrives."

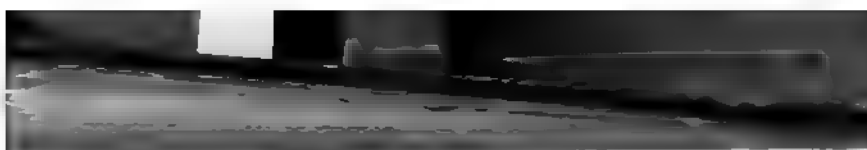
The baroness still felt dizzy, and she shut her eyes.

"Madame la baronne must rest," the valet repeated, "I will not call the maid; madame la baronne will permit me to attend her down-stairs." He assisted her to rise; when she had left the room he fastened the door; and on the way he whispered: "Madame la baronne need feel no anxiety. I will see to everything. When madame la baronne has recovered she will make further arrangements." He delivered his mistress into the care of her maid, who came in great haste. "Madame la baronne has had a slight attack of faintness, but it was nothing," he said to the woman, and hastily returned up-stairs.

The fact was that the man had never for a moment thought of going for a doctor. It was not in vain that he had been for three and twenty years the baron's head valet. That morning, when he had entered the baron's bedroom and had seen the little spot of blood on the pillow, and the revolver lying on the floor, it at once was clear to him that he knew something which was worth a great deal of money if it could for the present be kept a secret. Rapid consideration showed him that he must communicate it to the baroness, since she was the only person in the house whom he could not prevent from going into the baron's rooms. He urged upon her, however, most impressively the keeping of the secret, because probably the fate of the bank and of many other corporations depended thereon; and when he had the feeling that he had sufficiently impressed this idea upon her mind he hastily left the house, and betook himself, not to the doctor, to whom she had bidden him go, but to the *agent de change*, who for many years had made little ventures for him at the Bourse. To this man he confided the secret of the baron's suicide, and

gave him the order to sell as many shares as he possibly could of the French-Oriental bank—ten thousand, if he could—at whatever price, since undoubtedly they would at once drop to zero.

To wring every possible advantage from the situation it was essential that the secret should be kept till after the Bourse was over. He guarded it therefore like a lion. He spoke with the other servants only through the locked door of the little salon. The steward, who had all imaginable conjectures in his mind, endeavoured to force his way in, but in vain. The steward declared he would go for a doctor, since the one who had been called did not appear; the valet called out from inside that the steward should attend to his own affairs; the steward retorted that he would call in the police, for something wrong was going on; the valet opened the door suddenly, clinched with the steward, and threatened that the baroness would dismiss him instantly, if he made any further noise and trouble. In the hall and in the servants' room there was smothered excitement. People in the neighbourhood, overhearing the talk of the lackeys, began to be suspicious. A rumour spread through the city that the baron was ill; some asserted that he had suddenly become insane; others, that he was dead. The report reached the Bourse about an hour after it had opened; it produced great excitement and a wild tumult in the quotations, all the more because of the heavy sales of French-Oriental bank stock that had been observed since the opening. From one o'clock on, swarms of reporters and messengers from the Bourse were at the door of the *hôtel* Agostini; the lackeys could give no information and referred inquirers to the baron's own man; this personage received them in a dignified manner, and said in a tone of grave displeasure that these rumours were but a new trick of the baron's enemies; that the baron had gone the night before to the railway station to meet the baroness on her return, and had been up until nearly morning, so that now he needed rest; this was believed, and the Bourse closed firm. Up to two o'clock he had received four



messages, making known to him that his broker had been able to sell over 1600 shares. On receiving the fourth note, he took his hat, went moderately to the nearest police-station, and gave information of the baron's death. The well-deserved reward of his coolness and circumspection was that on this memorable day he gained over a million francs, shortly after left Paris and purchased an estate in the south, where he now lives, a much respected proprietor and the mayor of his commune.

He considered it no longer needful to lock the baron's rooms when he went out this time. All the household, therefore, knew the fact when he returned with the officer, and received him with furious outcry that he was the murderer. He was at once taken into custody, but was released when he calmly led the officer to the table at the baron's bedside, and called his attention to the scrap of paper, on which was feebly scratched the words: "Pardon, my dear Augusta, the pain that I must cause you, but circumstances render it impossible for me to live longer."

The commissary desired to see the baroness, wishing to subject her to an examination. She sat in the corner of a divan in the room adjoining her boudoir, her hands folded in her lap, her eyes fixed upon vacancy. Thus she had sat since recovering from her swoon. When her maid spoke to her she made no answer, and seemed to pay no attention. At noon, the servants had besought her to eat. But she would not rise from her seat and they brought her food. The *femme de chambre* constructed a wonderful melodrama for herself. She had seen Henneberg come and go, and was convinced there had been a quarrel upstairs, between the husband and the friend, perhaps even a break between the baron and madame, and the next thing would very likely be that the old man would send his wife away. This explained to her full satisfaction Henneberg's perturbation in leaving the house, as well as the baron's mysterious invisibility and the condition of the baroness.

The latter made not the slightest movement when

the police official with his secretary came in. He was obliged to speak to her three times before she turned her head towards him, looked at him like a person half asleep, and returned answer to his questions in a feeble, indifferent voice and only in monosyllables. After every question and answer she relapsed into the same stupefied condition and seemed to become unconscious of the officer's presence. He at once recognized the uselessness of the attempt to get anything more from her than "yes" and "no" and "I don't know," and contented himself with questioning the maid, who now, indeed, was obliged to abandon her ingeniously woven romance, but in its place, however, accepted the conviction that the baroness had lost her reason. This the officer believed, also; he promised to direct the doctor, who would come to view the body, also to examine into the mental condition of the baroness; and he bade the servants, meanwhile, to keep careful watch over their mistress. The doctor, who did not arrive until about four, found her stupor less profound. She was able, in a degree, to be aroused, was somewhat more like herself again, answered more fluently and intelligently to the questions asked her, and observed social usages. The physician recommended her to take a warm bath and to go to bed, and expressed the opinion that it was merely a condition of extreme despondency from which she would rally as soon as she had recovered from the recent shock.

Henneberg, on leaving the baroness, had driven home, had ordered his man to pack a small portmanteau, had ordered breakfast for half-past eleven and his carriage at a quarter past twelve. Then he locked himself into one of his inner rooms. Complete desolation reigned within him. Nothing was left standing after this frightful shock. His pride and his scepticism, his hope for a future of happiness and his contempt for mankind, lay wrecked together. He had believed himself superior to his race, and he was the slave of this woman who had banished him from her presence. He had been able to domineer over men of



wealth, station and power, and train them to obey his nod, and he was incapable of mastering this woman's obstinate will. He had without caring, indeed with actual pleasure, used violence and treachery, he had sought to plunder two hemispheres, and, as a matter of fact, he had plundered his nearest friends, rejoicing to drag the booty to his den and lay it at a woman's feet; and this woman had with contempt cast from her both the robber and the spoil. It was long since he had been disturbed by his own conscience, but this woman's conscience rose before him like a granite cliff. He had grounded his views of life on the axiom that all things could be had for money. And this woman had showed him that money was absolutely worthless to help him to the only thing on earth that he desired.

He sought to persuade himself that his desire for her was but a whim. He would banish the thought of her from his mind. There were other women in the world. If none more beautiful, at least there were younger. And equally clever. He had placed in safety the price of his house and other money. Three million francs lay secure in English banks. He could live where and as he pleased; perhaps more simply than of late, but also more peacefully, in an epicurean enjoyment of the passing hour, since that is all we really have. But his sophistry was silenced, as if smitten on the mouth, when he lifted his eyes to where, over his writing-table, hung the aquarelle portrait, and looked down on him, gentle, tender, willing to be loved, willing to yield to his will. More than once he sprang to his feet, with clenched fist, ready to destroy it in his fury. But he had not the strength to do this. Before the soft loveliness of the face, that he had just now seen inexorably hard toward him, his hand dropped, and he let his head fall upon the table, and broke into a flood of dastardly, miserable tears, which proved him defeated, disarmed, unmanned.

His whole life passed before his mental review—the goat's stall in the Potsdamerstrasse, and its dark corners filled with the visions of his childish imagination;

he remembered his needy, humble boyhood and youth, and the sudden change in his fortunes. What advantage had his wealth been to him? What remained to him now from his journeys and his lavish entertainments, his questionable adventures, his gold plate and gilded furniture? It was all gray, and desolate, and loathsome. To two human beings his heart had clung—his mother was dead, a life sacrificed to affection and poverty; and the other was dead to him; lost; lost for ever. And so his thoughts came back again to her; from whatever remote wanderings they returned to her; he could not escape from her.

He rose, hearing some one knock. It was the servant coming to announce *déjeuner*. Was it so late? What had become of the time? He went into the dining-room. The place looked strange to him. The silver and gold plate in the cabinet, the rare porcelain on the walls, the Cordova leather, seemed to insult him. Every separate object seemed to cry out to him, with thin, sarcastic tone: "Why are you here? Back, swindler, into your goat's stall!" He found it was impossible to eat. He said to his servant that he had postponed his journey, the carriage might be dismissed; and he returned into his own rooms.

About four o'clock, a shabby vehicle drew up before the house in the rue de Téhéran. A little old man got out, and two other men, stalwart and resolute of aspect, remained, one on the box, the other inside. The old man with the white moustache was the central commissioner, who appeared with an injunction against Henneberg. The alarmed servants conducted him to the locked door at the back of the oriental smoking-room. To a knock, no response was made. A repeated and louder knocking still produced no result. Then the officer sent for one of his stalwart attendants, who, with a strong push from the shoulder broke the door in. At his writing-table, beneath the picture, Henneberg sat, lifeless; he had shot himself through the head.

The evening papers that were in the interest of the ring, said, in their reports of the Bourse, that certain

shameless speculators had gone so far as to set in circulation the entirely groundless rumour that Baron Agostini had committed suicide; it was hoped that the inventors of this base calumny could be traced; meantime the public whose interests were thus endangered, were warned against similar disseminations. But in the course of the evening, the truth became known; and the small Bourse, opening at nine o'clock, which, after the summer interruption had again begun within the last four days, had an aspect like that on the day following a declaration of war.

CHAPTER XVII.

AFTER THE STORM.

THE morning after Henneberg's death when the Koppels were gathered around the breakfast-table, and Koppel, as usual, unfolded his newspaper, Frau Käthe saw him suddenly turn pale, and, with a movement of horror, drop it from his hand.

"Hugo, what is it?" she asked, in alarm.

Instead of answering, he handed her the paper. Her eye at once fell upon a row of headings in large type: "A Financial Catastrophe;" "Two Suicides;" "Four Arrests;" "The End of the Black Band;" "Government Interposition." Agostini, Henneberg—dead; Count Beira, General Zagal, two other financiers whose names were not known to the Koppels—imprisoned; the French-Oriental bank wrecked; the Market and the Bourse in the wildest uproar; the price of quicksilver rushing downward like an avalanche; in the evening Bourse, the shares of the suspended bank, which, on Saturday had been 940 francs, falling to 600, then to 300, finally to 80 francs; Almadens finding no buyers at any price. To the re-

cital of facts was added some account of the consternation of the public and the fury of those who had bought bank shares at the noon Bourse, and later, with great outcry, called for the annulling of these sales, inasmuch as the sellers had unquestionably been informed of Agostini's death, and had not acted in good faith. The subject was summed up in an article which spoke with the warmest approbation of the interference of government and the Bank of France. Recognizing the frightful danger which threatened the whole community, the Minister of Finance, late in the evening, had held a consultation with Baron Zeil and other gentlemen of the very highest financial position, whose advice was that a bank-syndicate should take possession of the French-Oriental bank and should repay all deposits. The stockholders would lose everything, but the depositors would be protected.

Frau Käthe glanced over the columns with dismay. "What a frightful end!" she exclaimed. "But it had to be so. I will not make myself out any wiser than I am, but it always seemed to me as if I was oppressed for breath when I have been at Henneberg's or at the Baroness Agostini's. The poor, poor baroness! I am sorry for her, most of all."

The two young people were also eager to see the news, but while Oscar only remarked coolly: "A little extirpation of vermin quite without importance to intellectual persons," Elsa was so shocked that she could not finish her coffee; and both she and her mother were much concerned to know what effect the whole thing would have upon Koppel. He sat silent and lost in thought, his hand, which held his coffee-spoon, trembled, and his eyes stared blankly, as if at some frightful object. His family did not suspect, however, what the events of yesterday signified to him, and what feelings they awakened in his heart. Not to betray himself, he rose and went out, though it still lacked a half-hour of his usual time of going to school.

Henneberg was dead. The commissary of police



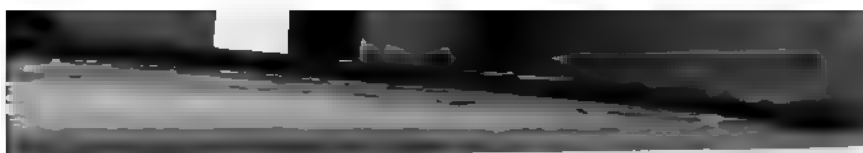
had found him with a bullet in his brain. How very nearly that fate had been his own ! He knew very well that, in the hour of his despair, one thought alone had had power to restrain him—the thought of wife and children. Had he been a bachelor, like Henneberg, he would doubtless have gone the same way. He had a vision of himself lying dead, he seemed to hear the reporters' tattle buzzing about him as now about the unfortunate Henneberg ; a prolonged shudder shook his very soul within him. And he remembered further how he had implored the *coulissier* to hold his Almadens for him, that through these he might make good the loss in the Russians, and how exasperated he had been against the man who brutally refused his agonized entreaty. Had the entreaty been successful he would now have lost a half-million. He felt that he owed his thanks to the broker, who had sold him out regardless of his prayers ; and he felt more than ever how right his wife had been when she had insisted that payment in full must be made of the 21,000 francs which he owed the *coulissier*, not legally indeed, but under the law of his conscience.

Something seemed to drag him with mysterious violence to the scene of these catastrophes. He awaited impatiently the close of the afternoon lessons that he might hasten to the rue de Téhéran—on foot, for the period of fiacres was past, for him. On the door of the great house was a notice offering all the apartments for lease. The room of the concierge, with its showy furniture, was full of a crowd of reporters with their notebooks, surrounding and questioning its occupant. The man himself had lost all his dignity and presence. The embroidered velvet cap, the mark of his calling, was gone from his head. His face, with the short side-whiskers as of a solicitor-general, expressed violent wrath. His voice scolded and broke. He spoke of his dead master in the most opprobrious terms : the Prussian swindler, the spy, the foreign pickpocket, had done this or that ; he was an arrogant, insolent, purse-proud upstart ; he was a niggard and an extortioner ; he lived by trickery

and cheating : what had the government been thinking about to tolerate his proceedings so long, instead of taking him by the nape of the neck and slinging him out of the country ! Also himself, the concierge, had the knave ruined completely ; all the savings of his life he had put into the vile securities that the scoundrel traded in, and now he was penniless. And at this point of his narrative, overcome with grief and rage, he sank down into the arm chair in which he had formerly sat so proudly, and shed abundant tears.

With deep disgust, Koppel quitted the place, and went to the French-Oriental bank. On the way he became aware with compunction that it ill became him to despise the concierge. This man, like himself, had speculated ; like himself, had lost ; and now cast the blame upon Henneberg, as he himself for a moment had done. The sordid vulgarity of this man reflected in a shocking manner his own moral debasement.

The narrow street in which stood the columned stone palace of the bank with its tall clock-tower, was black with human beings and impassible for carriages. A crowd of policemen kept the mass under control and preserved order. With a noticeable predilection for movement, these police-soldiers cried perpetually to the crowd which packed itself about them : " Move on ! move on !" and at times emphasized the meaning of the command by a poke in the ribs. Upon one sidewalk stood the depositors, who were admitted into the building a few at a time, and on the other, was a mass of idlers who had gathered from all parts of the city to see this spectacle of the downfall of a great bank. The middle of the street was kept open by the police, so far as they were able to do this. Here hawkers busied themselves, some of whom, with yelps, offered all sorts of loose sheets of printed matter, and others peddled various kinds of food and drink. " Disclosures about the Black Band ! Prussians in the Paris Bourse ! five centimes, one sou !" " The end of the Quicksilver-Ring ! Official and full particulars !" was shrieked out from hoarse throats and in voices like cracked tin trumpets ; and the yet damp sheets were



bought more eagerly than the oranges, the liquorice-water, the thin cakes, which were the rivals of the intellectual nourishment.

The depositors, among whom were many women, stood patiently, and, for the most part, showed no excitement. They knew already that assistance had been furnished to the ruined bank, and that, inside, at the counter, they were to get their money. Only when stragglers came along and slyly sought to obtain a place in the file, the inner excitement of those who were waiting betrayed itself in the disproportionate violence with which they screamed at these intruders: "Go back! Go back!" The men, as a rule, accepted the rebuff, and went, accompanied by jeering outcries, all the way along the living wall to the very end, and took their proper place. The women conducted themselves as if they did not hear, stood firm, and generally held on to the desired position, unless a policeman took them by the arm and led them back.

In this column of humanity stood stout and easy-looking men with their gold watch-chains, and there were also women in black clothes and crape veils, whose anxious and gloomy faces betrayed the terror they could scarcely yet control; and there were talkative old people, who, unasked, communicated to their neighbours that all the money they had in the world was in this bank and they must have died if they had lost it; and there were younger men with close-shut lips and brows wrinkled as with fatiguing brain-work. Koppel observed the faces, the figures. What suffering had impended over this crowd of human beings! How many individuals, how many families, had been in danger of absolute ruin until relief came! Whether the knaves who prey upon a community, he queried, ever set their misdeeds before their minds in such a *tableau vivant* as this? Whether they ever regard the mass of their victims as consisting of so many individual persons? If they were here, the bandits who plundered this bank, who had robbed him personally of his own property—then it suddenly occurred to him that he had never inquired where the

quarter-million came from which he, in the height of his success, had laid away in his box at the *Crédit Lyonnais*. In that quarter-million were perhaps the petty means of widows or aged persons. Some of that money was perhaps tear-stained, some of it even stained with blood. But his conscience had been dumb in the presence of Mammon, because there was no face of man to see. That the crime is anonymous makes the speculator comfortable in his raids. And his imagination busied itself inventively with the idea that securities and bank-notes might in some way bear a speaking trace of the previous owner, a picture or a kind of warrant of arrest, whereby the thought of any given person might pursue him who had wronged that person by unjustly possessing himself of the other's property.

From these meditations he was diverted by Monsieur Kohn who came up to him and saluted him. He also had come to enjoy the spectacle of the day. He looked in good case, seemed to have grown stouter, and was smoking an excellent Havana cigar.

"Are you here, monsieur le professeur?" he said, cheerfully. "This is a fine thing to happen, isn't it? I hope you don't lose anything."

"No," Koppel rejoined; "but you, Monsieur Kohn?"

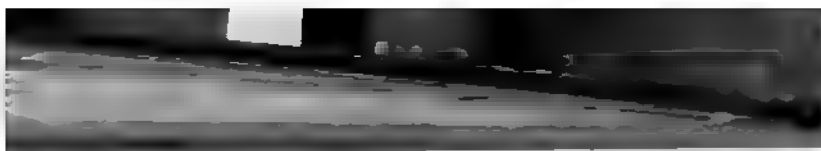
"I? oh, nothing serious."

"But you were in the syndicate?"

"That is true, my dear professor, I was. The gallant Henneberg twisted himself around me, and would have liked to break my ribs, also. But I got free in time, my name being Kohn, not Laocöon."

"A play upon words is your final adieu to a dead friend, is it? It is a delight to live in the world of finance," Koppel said, without any desire to conceal his aversion.

"What do you want me to say, my dear Doctor Koppel? In a like case, Henneberg would probably have made even a worse pun about me. But you are right. Henneberg, however, belonged to the world of finance about as much as I belong in a professor's



chair. The poor fellow was never anything but an amateur in finance ; amateurship is never profitable and always costs money. I know a song about that myself. I am also an amateur. Ask me what my collection of pictures has cost ! But let us leave the lamented Henneberg. How do you like this street scene ? I am going to have it painted. Raffaelli, I think, would be the right man. Or Béraud. There are only two forces that can bring together a crowd like this—money and religion."

Koppel left Kohn still delighting himself with this condensed statement of the philosophy of the scene before him.

Kohn had every reason to be content. When it became clear to his mind that Henneberg had made a mistake in his calculations, he at once sold short, and the destruction of the syndicate was an incident which threw into his hands between thirty and forty million francs. He regarded the three millions that he had put into it and, of course, had lost, as a very good investment. He was also able to trim his sails so cleverly that he was received into the new syndicate.

For, without delay, a new quicksilver syndicate was formed. Baron Zeil discovered that Henneberg's idea was a fruitful one, always provided that one carried it out with 1500 millions, instead of with only 300. He waited till the metal and the mining-shares were extremely depreciated. The consumers and the speculators waited also, hoping for still further depreciation. But as soon as the price was reached upon which he had fixed, Baron Zeil at once bought up everything ; he concluded new contracts with the discouraged mining-companies on much more advantageous terms than those which Henneberg had been obliged to accept ; he fixed all the prices higher than the former ring had ventured to fix them ; and speculators and consumers submitted to pay these prices because they perceived, like intelligent men, that the new ring, with Baron Zeil at its head, was stronger than they. The government shut its eyes, and thought no more about an investigation into the syndicate, for it was under

obligations to Baron Zeil on account of his prompt coming to the rescue in the affair of the French-Oriental bank, and making this bank again solvent, which it was the more for his interest to do, since he had bought it up for about eighty millions, and after a time, by reason of the new quicksilver ring, realized something like four hundred millions upon his purchase. And the press praised the baron's new syndicate in that it had prevented general disaster, and had rescued an important industry from the hands of foreign pickpockets to place it under the control of truly patriotic men.

Frau Käthe and Elsa thought incessantly of the unfortunate Baroness Agostini, much as they had in their own affairs to occupy their minds ; for, in the midst of her bitter regret at the present, perhaps the lasting, separation from Brünne-Tillig, Elsa had never ceased to feel that she must not give way to her grief, but must work more diligently than ever, since her successful work might be perhaps the only price with which she could buy her happiness. She insisted that her father, discouraged and distressed and vainly striving to help himself, should employ nearly all that she had so far earned, about 15,000 francs, as part payment of his debt of honour. A bit of her heart went with the money, for so much the more must now be earned to make up the sum of 75,000 francs, which would give her the right to accept Brünne-Tillig's proposals. But it was no matter ; the debt must be paid first. In this she and her mother were agreed. She retained 3,000 francs, to hire and furnish her atelier. Alas ! it was not what she had dreamed of having. No tiger or bear skin lay on the floor, no silken hangings adorned the walls. Cheap cretonne and oriental rugs made in France were there instead. For decoration, besides her own sketches, and her tenderly cherished house-plants, there were only gay but inexpensive posters by Chéret. The atelier, to which was attached a little unused box of a bedroom, looked into the Luxembourg Garden. The wife of the concierge was employed to keep the place tidy. When it was ready



Elsa came, often accompanied by her mother, or her grandmother, Oscar, or the surly maid servant,—often, however, alone,—early in the morning to her work, and continued it, with a short interruption for the noonday meal, until it grew dark. Hope and affection stimulated her, and aquarelles and pastels grew under her hand, abundant and beautiful as flowers in spring nights. When she had quite a number of pictures ready which seemed to her successful, she invited the dealer who had bought her exhibit from the Salon for 10,000 francs, to come and see her new work. He neither came or made any answer. Much surprised, she went, accompanied by her mother, to see him. He made known, rather uncivilly, that he did not require any more.

“Why is this?” the girl asked, “am I not the same person that I was in May? At that time you bought immediately, and at your own suggestion, my whole exhibit—”

The man smiled peculiarly, shrugged his shoulders, and only said: “Mademoiselle, it is hard times; our patrons have no money; my shop is full of pictures now.”

The mother and daughter visited other dealers. No one would buy. The best-disposed agreed to have the pictures on view in their shop-windows, where, however, they remained unnoticed.

Elsa was frightfully discouraged. They could not understand it. What had changed? Why did every thing seem to fail now, when her earlier work, which certainly was no better, had had such brilliant success? The sky grew dark above her. The star of hope faded and disappeared. Should she never, never reach the goal she had proposed to herself?

This was her mood of mind at the time of the downfall of the French-Oriental bank. She at once forgot her own fate in that of the Baroness Agostini. Her first impulse when she heard of the baron's suicide was to go to the baroness at once. But Frau Käthe dissuaded her. It was not even certain that the baroness was in town. And in the frightful confusion that

must prevail in the *hôtel* Agostini, any one's visit would be burdensome. The papers soon made known, however, that the baroness had returned from Brittany ; and a few days later, after the completely private funeral of the baron had taken place, Frau Käthe no longer opposed the girl's eager desire to visit her friend.

It was very manifest in the rue Fortuny that disaster had been there. Most of the servants were gone. The few that still remained went about in jackets and shabby trousers. On many of the doors there were large red seals on narrow strips of parchment. As they entered the hall, the steward came to them and in answer to their inquiry for the baroness, told them that she saw no one. But the visitors persisted. The steward was nearly at the end of his politeness when, attracted by the sound of the discussion, the maid appeared above, and called out on perceiving who was there : " François, let the ladies come up. These ladies are always welcome."

The steward retreated, with a shrug, and Frau Käthe and her daughter went upstairs.

" The poor lady will be glad to see you, I am sure," the maid said, as she conducted them in ; " since the disaster she has been quite alone, and not a soul comes near her except the ' black men ' who come to tease and torment her."

The baroness was in her bed-room, where Frau Käthe and Elsa had never before entered. The first objects that met Elsa's sight, even before the baroness herself, were her own pictures from the Salon. This, then, was the secret of the wonderful sale ! The baroness it was, who had sent the dealer, that she might not hurt the pride of the young artist ! In an instant Elsa understood and appreciated all the generosity, all the considerateness, of this noble woman ; and with the same rapid thought she recognized the fatal importance which the change in the circumstances of her patroness had for herself. All self-command forsook her. Sobbing violently, she rushed to the baroness and dropped on her knees beside her.



The baroness, very simply dressed in black, sat in an arm-chair near a Gothic *prie-dieu*. Her face was extremely pale, her eyes sunken and dulled. Slowly she turned toward the new-comers, slowly she extended her hand to Frau Käthe, slowly she put her arm around Elsa and drew the girl toward her. No one of the three said a word at first. But Elsa's excitement and something in Frau Käthe's look and manner seemed to help the baroness. Her feeble, weary face recovered itself a little, her eyes gained expression, and as she stroked the tear-wet cheek and the head of the beautiful girl who knelt at her side, and drew her gently nearer, she said feebly, and with a singular monotony in her voice, and hesitating between the words: "It was very good of you to come."

"*Ach!* Frau Baroness!" was all that Frau Käthe could say, while Elsa, in silence, kissed her hand.

"Ah!" the baroness replied, with a little start of surprise, "did you know the baroness?"

Frau Käthe trembled and looked at her with wide opened eyes.

"And the Countess Rigalle? She called herself so. Did you know her? No? But you knew Fräulein Hausblum, I think? Yes? I was sure you did. They are all dead, all three of them. And the baron is dead, too. And Dr. Henneberg also. Every one is dead."

She gazed blankly into vacancy for a moment, and then she went on:

"Fräulein Hausblum was rather self-willed, but she was a good, honest girl. Countess Rigalle—she was very much talked against; and it was quite right that she should be; she was a very wicked woman. She fought for herself, when it would have been better for her to keep still and say her prayers. The baroness Agostini—she was good. And she is dead, now. There are very strange things in this world."

"Dear, kind, gracious lady," Frau Käthe said, while the tears rolled down her cheeks, "you are alive, and you will recover." Elsa remained dumb and completely overwhelmed.

"Whether anyone is alive or dead," the baroness went on, in the same remote, monotonous, and hesitating voice, "is really, after all, the same thing. I did not know it before, but now I do. The dead are always here. I don't see them, but I can hear them. Did you know Dr. Klein? No? He was a great scholar. He explained this to me. The dead talk to us all the time, he said. It is true. With my right ear I am always hearing papa, and Dr. Klein, and the baron. But in my left ear people hiss and scream and revile me. Why should they? They have nothing to complain of that I have done. One troubles me especially. He is very rude to me and calls me horrid names. Must I endure it? Tell me what you think?"

A slight agitation was apparent in her; a faint colour came in her face, and her lip quivered like that of a child who is about to cry.

Frau Käthe exchanged a sad glance with Elsa, and rose from her seat.

"Are you going so soon?" the baroness asked, speaking somewhat more rapidly: "Well, it is no pleasure to be with me."

"We feared to fatigue you, gracious lady," Frau Käthe said.

"Oh no, it is not fatigue. It is something quite different. You have changed my rhythm. You know yourself, every person is a rhythm of one kind or another. Earlier I was different. I was never a waltz; no; serious and thoughtful, like: '*Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten.*' But now I am Chopin's *Marche funèbre*. It is very confusing until one gets used to it."

Frau Käthe pressed her hand long; Elsa embraced her and kissed her on both cheeks. The baroness remained quiet, nor did she rise when they left her. It was their intention to go silently past the maid, who waited for them in the boudoir. The latter noticed this, and only shook her head sadly and touched her own forehead significantly with her finger. Neither mother nor daughter could speak a word on their way home. Both were ill for a day as a result of their

visit ; and, long after, it would still happen to Elsa to break out in uncontrollable tears when she was alone and the thought of the baroness recurred to her.

The notary who, for nearly ten years, had had the care of the Baroness Agostini's business and held full power of attorney to act for her in all matters, had become extremely attached to his client. And he now devoted himself to her interests. He secured her removal to a hospital, to which she made no objection, and in the meanwhile, conscientiously protected her rights. After a few months she had so far recovered that it was possible for her to come out ; she still heard her voices, but she no longer had the idea that she was dead, and she took a certain interest in what went on about her. Paris was to her insupportable. She withdrew to her château in Brittany, where solitude matured in her a pious resolve. She founded a convent for the Sisters of S. Vincent de Paul, giving them her château and the estate and all her property, with the exception of a small part which after her death was to go to her half-sisters. She did not herself take the veil, but she wore a dress like the nuns', and lived with them as a kind of lay-sister.

She passed her time in prayer and meditation and the reading of works of the great Mystics, ancient and modern. For hours at a time she would sit in her room, which was almost as simple in its aspect as a cell, and fill page after page of a book, which, when it was full, she burned. She is now scarcely thirty-eight years old, almost completely grey-haired, her face is pale and thin, her former beauty is wonderfully spiritualized. The sisters regard her with mingled affection and shy admiration ; once in the year, between Easter and Whitsuntide, the Bishop of Quimper visits her ; the Breton people venerate her as a saint, and it often happens that poor women who meet her in the solitary paths of what was once the château but is now the convent park, step aside, bend a knee, cross themselves, and begin to repeat the rosary.

She never knew that during the months which she spent in the hospital, the gossip-papers dug up her

whole history, with exaggeration of facts and the addition of much scandalous fiction. This was the long-deferred revenge of the Countess Rigalle. Thus the whole story became known in the rue Saint-André-des-Arts, but it could not bring any stain upon the picture that, pure and beautiful, lived in the Koppels' hearts. Also, the Knecht family spoke of her with reverence and sincere gratitude as soon as it became a fact that the bank was to stand, and the husband of the blonde Marie to keep the place which the kindness of the baroness had procured for him. Nor did the Masmajours forget who it was that first secured them their rich *clientèle*. In the whole circle of those whom she had befriended there was but one being who thought of her with implacable resentment, and this was the otherwise so good and amiable Adèle.

On that fatal day when Masmajour read aloud to his family the account of Henneberg's suicide as given in the evening paper, Adèle had grown deathly pale and leaned back almost fainting in her chair. After a time she had been able to go to her room, whither Blanche, the only person who knew the secret of her heart, had shortly followed her. Adèle was crying bitterly, her face buried in her pillow. Blanche threw her arms about her sister: "Adèle," she said, "my little Adèle, be reasonable; it is most foolish to grieve like this."

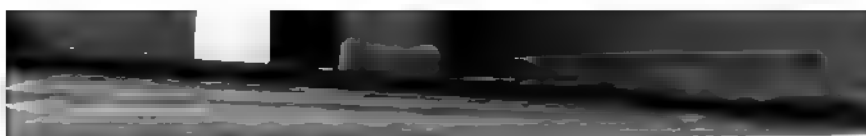
"You do not know," Adèle moaned, and sobbed afresh.

"But I do know, you foolish girl. You have a stupid idea in your head and you will not let it go. What could you find in that person? And he never noticed you at all!"

Upon this, Adèle dried her eyes and answered, speaking low but in a tone of irresistible conviction:

"No, Blanche, you are mistaken. He was handsome and proud and strong as a hero; and one could not help loving him when one saw him. And he loved me, also, you may be sure of that."

Blanche looked at her compassionately. Adèle persisted in her conviction and went on: "You never



noticed how he looked at me and how he spoke to me when we were on the Eiffel Tower, and the evening we were at supper at the Koppels'. You were too young and giddy. And he made known his love to me. How else could I understand it when he asked Elsa for my picture, and begged me, with a look, to let him have it? But because I gave him no encouragement he was hurt, and so, out of vexation, he threw himself into that dreadful woman's net. She was perhaps more beautiful and, at any rate, she was richer than I. But I loved him better and truer than she did, and if he had married me he would not have been desperate, but would be well and happy now. Ah, Blanche, perhaps it was all my fault. I ought not to have been so reserved."

Blanche was extremely surprised at this story, which the maidenly romantic soul of her sister, filled with a profound, yet unconscious need of love, and awakened by the first fleeting contact with a stranger, had woven for itself, but she did not ridicule it, nor did she say anything further. She contented herself with a sisterly embrace, and felt that time would do its work in banishing the delusion from Adèle's mind. Time did not disappoint the expectations founded upon it. Impressions lost, by degrees, their strong and lively colouring. Only at remote intervals, the drama was brought again to mind. At New Years it was to be read in the newspapers that the King of Laos, deprived by Henneberg's death of his principal support, had sailed with a handful of adventurers to return to Asia; that at Aden he had been abandoned by his followers; that, being without money or prospects, and being regarded by the English authorities as a dangerous filibuster and, as such, threatened by them, he had taken poison and had died in a hospital. And a few weeks later, Madame Masmajour related to Frau Käthe (having heard it herself from one of her South American customers) that General Zagal, who, after a nominal prosecution had been set at liberty, was absolutely ruined, and had left Paris, and returned to Honduras, endeavouring to set on foot

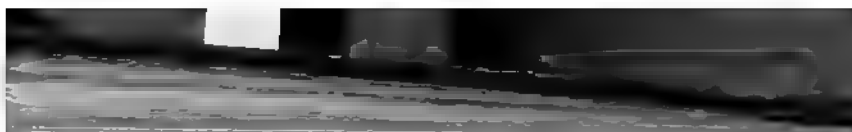
a rebellion, in the hope of again coming into power. This attempt had failed, however, his followers had been punished, he himself had been taken by the government and had been summarily shot.

After Madame Masmajour had gone, Frau Käthe said to her husband :

“ Do you remember our dinner at Henneberg's? How dismally right I was when I called it a Belshazzar's feast. Almost every person who was at the table that night is either dead or ruined.”

“ And I am one of them,” Koppel said dejectedly ; and this made Frau Käthe sorry that she had not suppressed her comment ; but the harm was done. Koppel remained the whole day visibly depressed.

He had not time, however, in these days, to yield to his own moods. When the storm had swept past, it was then necessary to rebuild what had been destroyed. Stung by the consciousness of his error, which the sight of his wife and daughter—uncomplaining, affectionate, but evidently more serious and anxious than they had been wont to be—kept active, he made the most strenuous efforts to recover his lost opportunities. He was devoted to his private pupils, he exasperated his colleagues by the eagerness with which he pursued his classes for more advanced girls, he prepared for a publisher of school-books inglorious, poorly paid, literal translations of the classics, true *pontes asinorum* for idle youth. This work, which kept him busy, late and early, preserved him from torturing reveries and reminiscences, and even gave him at times once more the comfortable self-deception that he was a good, honest, hard working man. But now and then when he bartered his hours for five franc pieces, and at the end of the month in a house received sixty or eighty francs, there would awaken in his mind grievous memories of the time when he drove in a fiacre to a banker's, and received, twice a month, 25,000 to 30,000 francs ; and he would seriously ask himself whether he really had done this, or whether it was a dream. He completely forgot the abysses of his nature which at critical moments yawned before his inner vision ; his



falsehood toward himself and others, his unconfessed envy, his tranquil readiness to speculate with money that was not his own, and to enjoy dishonourable gains. Over these slimy depths, his self-regard flung a cloudy veil which hid them from his sight.

Elsa, for her part, worked unweariedly but made no apparent progress. She exhibited separate pictures which, thanks to her brother and his comrades, were extravagantly praised in the small papers and in the "young" periodicals, but were scarcely noticed by the great papers or by the public; and, particularly, attracted no purchasers. To pay the rent of her studio and to pay her models she was obliged to habituate herself to selling carefully finished works for twenty franc pieces. After a year of steady, conscientious industry, she saw with discouragement that she indeed had made both ends meet, but had completely lost rank in the art-market, where the dealers only knew her now as the clever young lady who would accept twenty francs for a large aquarelle with figures.

It fell to the lot of Madame Masmajour to be able really to be of service to the Koppel family. Her business developed brilliantly, and her establishment became one of the most fashionable in Paris. She was obliged to increase her workrooms and treble the number of her workwomen and apprentices. She devoted herself personally to the invention of new styles. Adèle reigned in the reception room, where she occupied herself with the customers. Blanche gave out the work and superintended in the work-rooms. Masmajour was book-keeper and cashier. Madame Masmajour had said to him that he must consider himself not as in her employ but as in the employ of the firm which she represented; and he was regularly installed in this new occupation as he had been in Nîmes in the insurance business. She conferred upon him in due form the title of "Manager," and he put this fine, proud designation upon his visiting-card. He had a monthly salary of 250 francs, and performed for himself a delightful comedy, on the first day of

each month, with the same ceremonial every time. Madame Masmajour, as representative of the firm, gave him, in the morning, 250 francs in an envelope; and Monsieur Masmajour, as husband, gave back to her at noon, 150 francs. The rest he had for pocket-money. He was now contented, he had recovered his self-respect, and in the coffee-house where he was a regular guest and every evening had his game of dominos, he was wont to develop at much length an idea like this: "The government is doing all that it can do to destroy France; but this wonderful French people is indestructible. However often it has been plundered by foreign pirates and their accomplices within the country, the labour of its men replaces in a short time all that has been lost."

The business throve to the degree that Koppel received from his investment in the first year, 4,000 francs, and in the second year 7,000, so that, at the end of eighteen months he was able to pay off his debt to the *coulissier*. On giving him the receipt, the broker said to him:

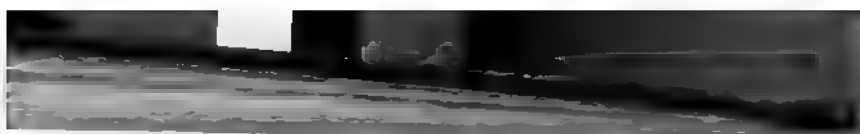
"I congratulate you, monsieur le docteur, on your sudden recovery. What a pity that you did not reverse in time! There was a fortune to be earned in Almadens. Of course I mean on the 'short' side. A man cannot afford to be obstinate at the Bourse and insist on his own way. It is essential to follow every lead without hesitation."

"Monsieur Pfiester always preached to me that one must persevere, at the Bourse," Koppel said, smiling bitterly.

"Pfiester!" exclaimed the *coulissier*. "See what has become of him, with all his wisdom. After no one would trust him here any longer, he went over to London to see what the stock exchange would do with him."

The broker added a friendly intimation that he should be happy to be useful to Koppel at any time, if the latter should wish again to "operate,"—of course, carefully, at first, and in a small way.

Koppel fled. "At the Bourse a man must per-



severe! At the Bourse a man must not be obstinate!" rang in his ears, and it seemed to him as if Fate were jeering at him with this harlequin-wisdom.

The Masmajours had no idea of the circumstances of the Koppels. They supposed the latter to be rich, and it was a comfort to them now to feel themselves on an equality with their old neighbours and former friends. The two families saw each other frequently, twice or three times a week, and it was a great satisfaction to Madame Masmajour to boast of her first year's brilliant success, when on that very day, it happened that Frau Käthe and Elsa came to see her. Then, Elsa could not help saying, rather sadly: "Alas! I wish I could say as much." And then, for the first time, Madame Masmajour learned of Elsa's strenuous efforts, and the family's narrow circumstances. She took this news much to heart and consulted with her daughters how they might in some way be of service to their friends to whom they were all so much attached. The mind soon finds a way, when the heart helps in the search. Adèle overcame her shyness, and was willing that her pastel-portrait, now again in a handsome frame, should be placed conspicuously in the reception-room; and Madame Masmajour asked to have some other pictures of Elsa's that she might exhibit them also. And now, the mother and daughters made it their business to recommend their friend's work more assiduously even than they did their own; with every new South American customer they never failed to call attention to the lovely portrait of Adèle, and to make it clear that to have one's picture from the hand of this young artist was an imperative demand of good taste. Very rich ladies learned the way to Elsa's atelier; she again received commands, and though the prices paid were no longer in thousands of francs, as in the time of the Baroness Agostini, but only modest sums of a hundred and fifty, or two hundred, or at most three hundred francs, still her second year was very much more profitable than the first had been. When with much emotion, she thanked Madame Masmajour for the

first successful recommendation, the other interrupted her quickly ; " Mademoiselle Elsa, how can you ! I was a poor woman working by the day, when you first gave me a helping hand. Your mamma recommended me to the Baroness Agostini ; your papa helped me to establish my business. I am only too happy that I can do a very little to show my gratitude."

And now, since the Masmajours were once more in prosperity, the circle of their acquaintances soon widened, and it was not long before there came an aspirant for the hand of Adèle first, and then, one for that of Blanche. Adèle declared absolutely that she would never marry, and begged her mother to keep her at home with herself. Madame Masmajour translated Adèle's answer into this form : " My daughter does not wish to be married at present," and assured the girl that she should never be compelled to accept any one. And to the younger sister, Madame Masmajour did not even mention the subject at all. Blanche was but nineteen. There was no haste. Very likely her little romance with Oscar still lingered in her thoughts. She must have time to forget it completely.

When first that affair was broken off Blanche had felt extremely grieved. She had felt herself a victim to domestic tyranny, and was determined to defend her love against fate and mankind, against time and distance, to her latest breath. She relied upon her strength and persistency ; what was it to her that she did not see her beloved, that she must wait perhaps for years before she could again rush into his arms ? She would willingly wait, patiently and faithfully. If Oscar persevered she would persevere also. She gave love for love, and he should never regret having trusted her.

Meantime months and months passed away, without her ever hearing directly from Oscar, and this was not without its effect upon her. Did he think of her still ? Why did he make no efforts, in spite of all hindrances, to send some token, however slight, that his love endured ? It could not be impossible to do this, if he

were resolute. She asked Elsa. The sister was extremely reticent, but from her brief, evasive answers, Blanche did not gain the idea that Oscar was extremely occupied with her. At first she suspected design in Elsa's remarks about her brother; but in time, so many things accidentally became known to her that she began to believe she was forgotten.

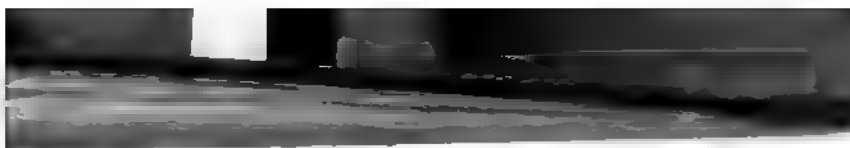
Oscar was never informed of his father's losses. As nothing more was said about sending him to Germany, he believed that his own will had conquered. His victory almost grieved him, however, and he came very near going to his father and saying: "Forgive me my obstinacy, and do with me as you will." On mature reflection he gave this up, but he proposed to himself at least never again to cause his good father any trouble.

He made no attempt to approach Blanche in any way. He also no longer talked with Elsa about her. He was very industrious at school, he gained his baccalaureate with honour, and began to devote all his energies to his work as an author. He composed a drama for the Théâtre Libre, and to his great joy it was accepted, though as about the sixtieth on the list. He was promised that its performance would not be deferred beyond five years, at longest. He then wrote a novel, and sought to find a publisher for it. There was no difficulty about its being printed, if he were willing to bear the expense. A newspaper did accept it, but would not agree to pay anything for this first work of a beginner, and also must postpone using it for two years, being otherwise pledged by contract up to that time. His father took occasion to say to him that he must always bear in mind that he had no inheritance to expect, and would one day have not only to maintain himself, but also to be the support of his mother and sister. He saw himself, therefore, under the necessity of making a practical use of his abilities, and after numberless steps, visits, and sending of specimen-work, he had the satisfaction finally of being accepted by a second-rate paper as a reporter, at a salary of 150 francs a month. What had decided the matter

in his favor was not his poetry, nor his knowledge of German, nor the flattering opinions which his comrades had expressed concerning himself and his work. The paper required a bicyclist for its reporter, and was induced to accept Oscar, in some slight degree because he could write, but chiefly because he could ride a wheel.

He, however, did not long remain at the foot of the ladder but soon rose to the signed "*Chronique*." He was obliged at this time to give up living at home, as his duties interfered with any regularity as to meals or sleep. He made an attempt at first to quarter himself in Elsa's studio. There soon appeared to be disadvantages in this, however; and he then took a room for himself, in a neighbourhood frequented by his comrades, in the Montmartre quarter. He was now fully fledged, he no longer came daily to see his family, he asked no further help from them, and began his work of conquering Paris. He received the higher consecration of his profession. Before he was twenty, he had fought two duels with daggers, to his mother's inexpressible horror, fortunately, however, without receiving serious injury—once, because the opponent had, in print, called him "a nasty Prussian," the other in consequence of a quarrel behind the scenes in a petty theatre, to which the *ewig weibliche* was not altogether foreign.

The time came when he was obliged to decide whether he would take military service in Germany or would renounce his nationality. He did not hesitate at all, but reported himself to the authorities as an emigrant. But neither did he, for the present, make himself a French subject. There was no longer volunteer service for a year in France, he had no influential friends who could obtain favours for him, and a three years' barrack-life was repugnant to his inmost soul. He had, therefore, legally, no country. Nowhere, in the world, was he a citizen. He regarded this as an advantage, however. In the "young" periodicals, he ridiculed the notion of "a fatherland;" and this brought him such honour among the callow parlour-



anarchists that, in spite of his youth, they gave him the complimentary title of "Master." He boasted, scornfully, that he was an Individual in the abstract, a Personality, pure and simple, without that vulgar background which people call a nation. He was a politically neutralized human being, resembling, on a small scale the peaceful solution of the Alsace-Lorraine question.

Where was Blanche all this time? Alas! she had scarcely any place at all in his thoughts. He employed himself with his ambition, his daily work, his unsavoury Montmartre adventures, and remembered with only a sad, yet self-derisive smile, his first romantic passion. With the gloomy, ice-cold introspection habitual in the circle to which he belonged, he dissected his former feeling and decided that it was made up, partly, from the results of novel-reading, partly, from unconscious or half-conscious boyish susceptibility, and partly, from a certain enthusiasm for the first young girl with whom he had ever come in contact. This first young girl had been really very sweet and charming, but it made him very uncomfortable to think what might have happened, if his letter had not been discovered. What if Blanche had allowed herself to be carried off? He would never have deserted her; or, at least, he flattered himself that he would have been incapable of such baseness. And now, he should have a wife and perhaps a family about his neck. That would be worse than a mill-stone! He would be out of the running, then. He would be doomed to obscurity and poverty all his life. He could never be sufficiently thankful to fate that it had graciously averted from him a disaster so frightful. Oddly enough, in this consideration he always thought of himself, his own lot, his own inclinations. The question what would have become of Blanche, had she consented, never came into his mind.

Over two years had passed since the Masmajours had left the rue Saint-André-des-Arts. Blanche had never been allowed to enter the house again, lest she might meet Oscar. She was excluded from her family's visits to the Koppels. She felt this as a con-

straint, against which, at last, she rebelled. One Sunday when Adèle and her mother were preparing to go and see Frau Käthe, Blanche said, with decision: "I am going, too."

Her mother and sister were shocked and exchanged dubious glances. But Blanche continued: "Why not? I am just as fond of Madame Koppel as you are, and Elsa is just as much my friend as she is yours. I am not a child any more, to be kept at home as a punishment."

Madame Masmajour collected her thoughts as best she could: "My dear Blanche," she said, "you know why we ask you not to come with us. It is better to avoid meeting ——"

"I am not afraid," Blanche interrupted; "I have had time to think it all over, you know. I believe that Oscar has forgotten me. And at least, if he has not, he has become very tranquil. I feel that in myself; and it is time the whole matter should be settled."

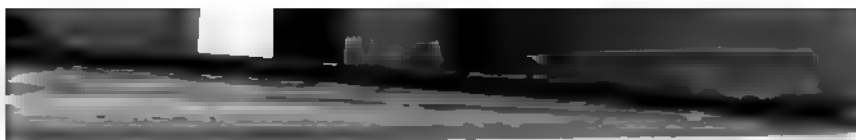
"What do you mean?" her mother asked, much confused and distressed.

"I feel this, dear mamma; I am quite indifferent, as I look back; but to be perfectly sure of this, I want to see Oscar again. I shall know then, if I am really free and sound, if I find that it does n't hurt me at all to see him again, and I think it will not."

"It is a serious experiment," Adèle said.

"But I must try it, unless you want me to remain always in doubt," Blanche insisted. She spoke so firmly and with so much tranquillity, that Madame Masmajour dared make no further objection.

Blanche's appearance at the Koppels' caused a great sensation. Frau Käthe and Elsa understood the motive, and received the girl as an especially welcome guest. Oscar was not there. And two more visits from Blanche were equally without special result. But the fourth time, it chanced that Oscar came in. He was extremely surprised at seeing his former sweetheart, and stood still in the doorway. Blanche had the advantage of expecting to meet him, and was



calm and smiling. If her heart fluttered a little, she was able to conceal the fact. He blundered some words of greeting, as she calmly offered him her hand, which he seemed to touch with reluctance. They examined each other slyly, while he took a seat, awkwardly, in his uncontrollable embarrassment, and made general remarks, addressed rather to the mother than the daughter. He was no stouter, scarcely any broader, than of old; but he was very stylish in his clothes and the cut of his hair, and positively used a monocle. And he remarked with surprise, and also with dismay, that Blanche disappointed him. Time had done its idealizing work upon his memory of the girl. The picture that lived in his imagination was quite different from the reality. He thought her figure rather diminutive, her forehead rather too low, her dainty little nose rather too aquiline, her lips rather too full. And there was lacking especially that wondrous radiance that used to surround her. He had no idea that it had been purely a matter of his excited fancy, and he really believed she had lost it. Now she was only a nice little girl, like any other; no more, no less. There was nothing in her to make a young man of lofty aims sacrifice his life to her. He would have wronged himself had he done it.

These considerations restored his self-command. He spoke in a fluent tone of good society to Blanche; he used *vous*, as if he had never said *tu* in his life. He was quite certain he should have used the *vous* if he had been talking with her quite alone. He felt much more embarrassment than tenderness in being near her.

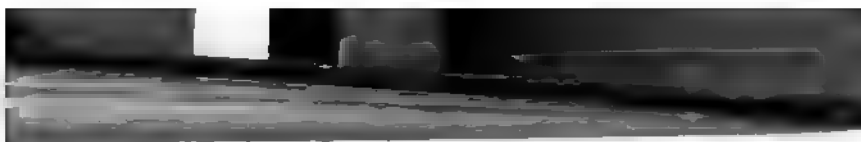
Blanche's acuteness of perception saw or felt what passed in his mind. Nothing in him betrayed the rush of any long-suppressed feeling. His eyes rested on her without rapture. In his voice no longer trembled things unspeakable. Her experiment had given what she desired from it. She left the Koppels, the richer by a sad experience. There was, it cannot be denied, a slight pain at her heart as she walked silently homeward at her mother's side. It was not

because she had done with Oscar that she had a heart-ache, but only that she was obliged to recognise the fugitive character of young, passionate, ardent love. She felt sadly that if Oscar had wished it, she would have been to him to-day the same that she was two years before. But he had not wished it. Talking with Adèle that evening, she made a remark which her sister didn't at first understand and only long after fully appreciated. "Do you know, Adèle," Blanche said, "I think that men are like fireflies. They glow, but they are cold."

Soon after this, another suitor made a proposal for Blanche. He was the son of one of Madame Masmajour's business associates, a well-educated, not bad fellow, who would be the only heir to his father's prosperous business. The parents permitted him to pay his court to the girl, and, after short reflection, she accepted him.

"You see, mamma," she said, "I am reasonable. I ask from life nothing more than it can give. I think Monsieur Georges will make a dutiful husband." But to Adèle she remarked: "Alas! Adèle, it is too sad; we don't marry the man we love; and we don't love the man we marry."

It was with a heavy heart that Elsa saw little Blanche in her bridal dress. Not with envy; of that she was incapable; but with sad conclusions as to herself. She thought as seldom as possible of Brünne-Tilig, for when she thought of him she had to cry, and that hindered her at her painting. That he was always present in her thoughts even when they were not expressly occupied with him, she knew by all sorts of tokens; men did not exist, so far as she was concerned, and if any one showed devotion, she recoiled from it instinctively. When she was very tired she would begin to dream, and it was always the same thing; she had been able to lay up the 75,000 francs, and then—but here she would shake off the dream and say to herself with bitter scorn: "If it continues to go as well with me as it has this year, in eighteen or nineteen years I shall have my dowry in hand. I shall be thirty-



nine years old or forty, then, just the right age to do a reasonable thing ! And my old-gold hair will be old-silver hair by that time, and I shall be the most charming of my sex."

At the time Frau Käthe had related to her husband the story of Brünne-Tillig's proposal and Elsa's refusal, Koppel had gone, as he said he should do, to see the young officer, but had not found him. The following day he had made a second attempt, but Brünne-Tillig had left Paris. Koppel wrote him, however, a really pathetic letter, in which he confided to him that it was not from lack of regard that Elsa had refused his hand, but that it was because she had not "the officer's guaranty," and had no assurance that she ever should have it ; and she was not willing to bring him into the painful position of withdrawing his proposal of marriage when he should learn the situation of affairs. A few days later came a brief reply from Brünne-Tillig ; he was very grateful for the kind explanation ; he had never thought of the possibility of such a hindrance ; it was, as a matter of fact, at the present time insuperable ; and he would have been very grateful if Mademoiselle Koppel had deigned herself to honor him with her full confidence.

After that, he had not been heard from again.

But on a radiant May morning, the day before Elsa's twenty-first birthday, it came to pass that Brünne-Tillig appeared unawares before the unsuspecting Frau Käthe in her salon, and—while she was very much startled, and grew pale and then red, and could not speak a word—came forward smiling, kissed her hand, and without needless preliminaries inquired : "Is Elsa free ?"

"Oh, Herr von Brünne-Tillig, how can you ask?" the mother said, reproachfully.

"Will she still accept me ?"

"Poor child !" Frau Käthe said, and wiped off some tears.

"Then it's all right," the young man rejoined, "for I have come to get her."

It appeared that by a cousin's death he had received

an inheritance, a large estate in the country; that he had at once quitted the service, and no "guaranty" was now needed. He had made inquiries through the Embassy, and, learning that Elsa was not married, he had come in search of his happiness. Successively Elsa and her father came home to dinner, and there was an outcry each time; Elsa seemed to be a little faint and had to be supported, and—no one knew just how—in another minute, she was crying silently, with happiness, in Brünne-Tillig's arms. She asked nothing; he said nothing; but it was all understood. Since he was there, evidently he would never again leave her. The older people left them alone, and later when they came in again to invite their son-in-law to dinner, the two sat hand in hand, with shining eyes, quite lost in looking at each other. At table they spoke to each other with the *du*, and used each other's given names.

"Is it going to break your heart to leave your dear Paris?" Brünne-Tillig said teasingly.

"Is it going to be hard to leave mamma and grand-mamma. But against heart-break, I am secure," Elsa answered, in a low voice and shyly: "I have had the protective treatment to the fullest degree."

He kissed her hand gratefully and tenderly. "But what is the famous artist going to do in our humble life?"

"Oh, fame? I have given up that idea, since I have had to try to sell my pictures."

"You'll not have that to do any more, my Elsa."

"But I may paint?"

"Oh yes, for our château. There are rooms enough to give you occupation."

It was the first happy day that Koppel had had for three years. He went off to have his feelings to himself. They were not happy very long. They changed by degrees into sadness, and then, into bitterness. Elsa, at least, was safe. But it was no merit of his that her life had not been fatally spoiled. And she was to go home to Germany. But he and Frau Käthe and his mother must still live far away from the Fatherland, and the son was a stranger to it and to

the race to which he belonged. What satisfaction could he yet hope for in life? None. Every hope was destroyed that he should ever again rise out of the dull, wearisome mediocrity into which he was slowly sinking back. What a life he had dreamed of! What a life his had now become! He had wished for so much, and he had been able to do nothing! nothing!

And suddenly the thought of the mangy dog-skin that he had bought long ago in the Hôtel Drouot, which still lay in its quiet place, came to him and he said to himself with a melancholy smile, that this mangy pelt, which from a distance had seemed to him a beautiful object, was the symbol of his life.

THE END.



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